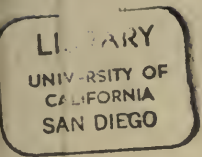


THE ORESTEAN TRILOGY



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THE ATHENIAN DRAMA

A Series of Verse Translations from the Greek Dramatic
Poets, with Commentaries and Explanatory
Essays, for English Readers

EDITED BY

GEORGE C. W. WARR, M.A.

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“ THE ORESTEIA OF AESCHYLUS ”

IN PREPARATION

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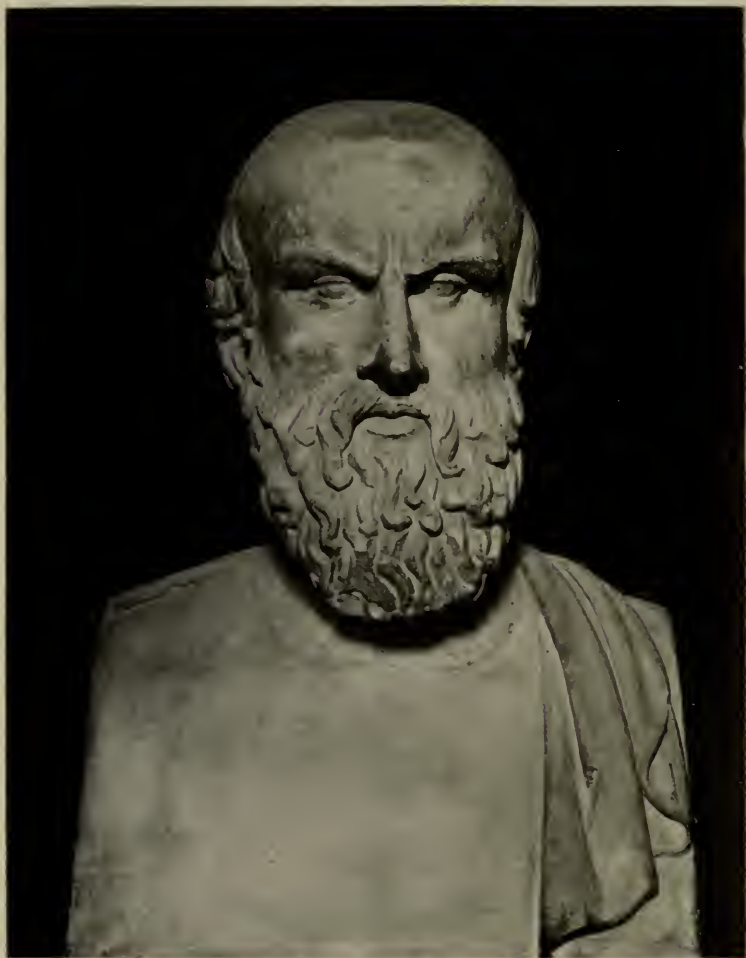
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"To Aeschylus, son of Euphorion
of Athens named and lawny Marathon.
His spirit speaks from Gela's golden sword
'Brave-mitred Mede, thy death was my reward.'"

From a photo by D. Anderson.

THE ORESTEIA OF AESCHYLUS

TRANSLATED AND EXPLAINED BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON

GEORGE ALLEN, 156, CHARING CROSS ROAD

1900

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To

GEORGE FREDERICK WATTS, R.A.

*Thy hand from Earth's gay vesture caught the sheen,
While, looking in the mirror of her eyes,
Thy spirit drew a glory from the skies,
And felt an air unearthly and serene.
So reading that which shall be and hath been,
Thy vision could transfigure Time, that hies
On wings of Love divine, and Man, who dies
But as the day. Earth showed thee things unseen,
The golden seeds slow ripening with her years ;
And lo ! as when she smiles through sunny tears,
Building in purple mist a rainbow bright
As our Immortals trod in old Asgard,
Behind her veil of beauty, painter-bard,
Thou sawest God's fair face, that gave thee light.*

CLYTEMNESTRA WATCHING

*Orion, spare my homing dove ! Awake
No storm, to waste his blood upon the brine.
I have a silver sea, which needs must shine
With that rare purple for my daughter's sake ;
And thou, Aegisthus, for thy kin shalt slake
Thy sword's long thirst, when I incarnadine
The bowl that blends my heart of hate with thine.
So let yon wint'ry heaven watch, nor break
In wrath ; but burn, Selene, burn for him,
Yea, light him to Death's bed-rite. He shall wive
With Furies strong to scatter limb from limb,
Go halt from a dog's grave, and hell-ward mole
Accursed. Then, lest he taint thee, or thou shrive,
Hide in the wrack, and beam upon my soul.*

P R E F A C E

C O N S I D E R I N G the obvious advantages offered by the combination of translation with commentary, it is strange that the field of Greek and Roman literature has been so far neglected in this respect that the classics—the basis of literary education in our schools and colleges—are still, so to speak, sealed books for all but students of Greek and Latin. By those who do not possess the key to the originals they are read, if at all, with little real appreciation, while it is to be feared that the majority even of those who have acquired the key at much expense of time and labour make hardly any subsequent use of it.

The difficulty seems to be met most simply and directly, not only for the 'English reader,' but for the more or less instructed student, by thoroughly annotated translations, giving to the latter the means of widening the area of his early reading and following it up in after

life, so as to make the ancient literature a permanent possession. Translations on these lines from the Greek have the further recommendation that they go far to fill the gap and bring continuity into the classical work of the 'modern side,' which is restricted to Latin.

The deficiency has been made good recently, in the Homeric sphere, by Dr. Leaf's 'Companion to the Iliad,' Mr. Andrew Lang's new version of the Homeric Hymns, and my volume, 'The Greek Epic,' in the series entitled 'The Dawn of European Literature.'

The present series is designed to further the study of the highly characteristic and complex phases of Greek life and thought embodied in the Attic drama, a province of no less importance than that of the Epic poetry, and demanding even fuller elucidation, permeated as it is by a spirit unfamiliar to modern ideas, and presupposing a mass of tradition, without which much of its human interest is lost. The plan adopted is to furnish in a running commentary what is required to explain each play in detail, and in one or more introductory essays to set forth the more general aspects of the subject-matter and the poet's environment.

The main subject of the Introduction to the

present volume is the origin of Greek tragedy. In the next two volumes the later developments of the tragic drama will be dealt with in their proper sequence. In the fourth it is proposed to include specimens of the Graeco-Roman as well as the Greek comedy.

The illustrations are drawn directly from Greek sources, with a view to bring the light of archaeology to bear on points of prominent interest.

Verse has been preferred as the more appropriate vehicle in the dialogue, and as facilitating the use of the English text for dramatic performance. In the lyrical portions I have attempted the somewhat difficult method of modulated prose. A few metrical versions from the choruses are appended to the Translation. These were published in an illustrated volume entitled 'Echoes of Hellas,' with a portion of the dialogue, now revised.

The translation follows Mr. Arthur Sidgwick's edition of the Greek text, with exceptions enumerated in the Appendix, and I have constantly profited by his notes. Numerous references attest my debt to recent researches, especially those of Dr. Verrall, Miss Harrison, Professor U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, and Wecklein. I am under special obligations

to Dr. Carl Jacobsen, of Copenhagen, for photographs of two important reliefs in his Museum, and to Mr. Cecil Smith for his kind aid in selecting the other illustrations.

The sonnet entitled 'Clytemnestra Watching' is suggested by Lord Leighton's picture, now in Leighton House, Kensington.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
SONNETS	v
PREFACE	ix
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	xv
INTRODUCTORY ESSAYS—	
I. THE RISE OF GREEK TRAGEDY	xvii
II. THE ORESTEAN TRILOGY	xxxiv
TRANSLATION—	
AGAMEMNON	1
CHOEPHOROE	50
EUMENIDES	83
METRICAL VERSIONS	117
COMMENTARY	131
LIST OF VARIATIONS FROM SIDGWICK'S TEXT	217
INDEX	218

ILLUSTRATIONS

BRONZE RELIEF OF ATHENA		<i>Cover</i>
Collignon, 'Histoire de Sculpture,' I. fig. 197. [English Photographic Co., Athens.]		
PORTRAIT BUST OF AESCHYLUS, OF THE FIFTH CENT. B.C.		<i>Frontispiece</i>
See Haigh, 'Tragic Drama of the Greeks,' p. 55. The epitaph (Vita Aeschyli, p. 5, Dindorf) was inscribed on his tomb by the people of Gela, where he died and was buried, B.C. 456. It was written by himself, according to Athenaeus and Pausanias, I. xiv. 5. [Anderson photo.]		
DEKADRACHM OF AGRIGENTUM, BEFORE B.C. 416 (MUNICH)		<i>Page 4</i>
<i>Obv.</i> , Two eagles seizing a hare. <i>Rev.</i> , Niké driving quadriga. Cf. <i>Agam.</i> 112 ff.		
THE SACRIFICE OF IPHIGENEIA		<i>„ 7</i>
Fresco in the House of the Tragic Poet, Pompeii. [Alinari photo.]		
VOTIVE RELIEF OF ARTEMIS BENDIS		<i>„ 10</i>
In the British Museum.		
STELE OF ARISTION, BY ARISTOCLES, CIRC. B.C. 460		<i>„ 12</i>
In the National Museum, Athens. [English Photographic Co., Athens.]		
LYING IN STATE: TERRA-COTTA TABLET, OF THE SIXTH CENT. B.C.		<i>„ 50</i>
The names above the figures denote relatives, viz., grandfather, father, mother, brother, sisters, aunts. (Benndorf, 'Griech. und Sicil. Vasenbilder,' pl. i. <i>Design restored by Mr. F. Anderson.</i>)		

ARCHAIC GRAVE RELIEF, FROM CHRYSAPHA NEAR SPARTA	Page 54
(‘Athen. Mittheil.’ ii. See Gardner, ‘Sculptured Tombs of Hellas,’ ch. vi.)	
ARRIVAL AT THE TOMB: VASE-PAINTING OF THE SIXTH CENT. B.C.	„ 62
(Rayet, ‘Monum. de l’Art Antique.’) Two wailing-women are seated on the funeral wagon, two others stand at the tomb, where a cock is waiting to be offered. The ceme- tery is indicated by trees.	
THE DEATH OF AEGISTHUS: RELIEF OF ARCHAIC STYLE	„ 76
From Ariccia, probably the work of a Greek sculptor living in S. Italy. (Gamle Glypto- thek, Copenhagen.) Clytemnestra, rushing forward, lays her hand on Orestes’ shoulder; Electra stands behind her exulting. The women wailing on either side may represent a Chorus.	
DELPHI, FROM THE SOUTH	„ 82
[English Photographic Co., Athens.]	
THE PURIFICATION OF ORESTES: VASE-PAINTING	„ 86
(‘Mon. dell’ Inst.’ iv, pl. 48.)	
THE STRIFE OF APOLLO AND HERACLES FOR THE DELPHIC TRIPOD	„ 88
Archaistic relief (Gamle Glyptothek, Copen- hagen). The locality is indicated by the omphalos, covered with a net (<i>agrenon</i>). Cf. Huddilston, ‘Greek Tragedy in the Light of Vase-Painting,’ ch. iii. § 3.	
BRONZE ATHENA POLIAS, OF THE SIXTH CENT. B.C.	„ 92
With inscription, “Meleso dedicated me as a tenth to Athene.”	

INTRODUCTION

I

THE RISE OF GREEK TRAGEDY

THE name of Dionysus, the wine-god, has a twofold import even in Homer.¹ We get a glimpse of the romance and mystery gathering round him in the story of the Thracian king, Lycurgus, harrying the young god and his holy nurses on 'Nysa.' The tale has an authentic side; for they are described as bearing mystic implements in their hands, and he is called the 'madding' Dionysus. A vague rumour had reached the poet of 'possessed' women impersonating his 'Maenad' following in ritualistic dances. The persecution—implying a real resistance to the new cult—is a variation of the Pentheus legend, which is echoed elsewhere in an allusion to the wooing of Semele. And there is a doubtful reference to Dionysus as 'witnessing' at the 'death' of Ariadne, whom Theseus was carrying away from Crete to the 'hill of sacred Athens.'

¹ *Il.* vi. 132-40, xiv. 323; *Od.* xi. 321-5.

The two streams of tradition ran more and more apart as the worship of Dionysus spread southwards. Mystic dancing and ecstasy came into vogue for women-pilgrims, who flocked to Parnassus and Cithaeron to find relief from a dull, constrained life. But the men of Attica were content with festivities and shows, till the god reappeared in disguise as Iacchus at Eleusis, offering with Demeter a heaven in the world of the dead.

The Dionysian cult appears to have taken root in two parts of Attica. It grew up among the farmers and herdsmen of the highlands (Diacria), especially in the deme of Icaria, and it entered from Eleutherae at the foot of Cithaeron on the Boeotian frontier. From the latter region Dionysus brought something of the sanctity, which drew the women to his 'orgies' on the sacred mountain. He had his local priests: the name of his sponsor, 'Pegasos,' may possibly indicate his influence in wells, which the vase-painters figured by a Naiad emerging where he strikes the ground. If his own name be derived from the ubiquitous 'Nysa,' it may be similarly understood as descriptive of watery mountain slopes and denoting as a whole the 'sky-stream,' fertilising all the greenwood with moisture. But he was very closely linked with his peculiar tree, the

vine, and even imagined as residing in it (*endendros*).

The rustic worship gave birth to legends such as that of 'Icarius,' who was said to have first received the god's gift, and to have perished through the 'madness' of drunken boors. The story was, however, expanded to account for a primitive 'swing' festival (*aïora*), at which women sang of his daughter Erigone, who hanged herself in grief for his death. But the title of the song, 'Aletis,' meant 'sinner,' and the swinging was but the survival of a wave-offering to expiate some sacrilege: accordingly a 'Delphic' version made her a daughter of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, and represented her as hanging herself in despair on the acquittal of Orestes at Athens!

That Dionysus became the great popular god of Attica is seen from the fact, that every month but one, from autumn to spring, had its festival in his honour.

First came the *Oscophoria* (feast of the grape-gathering), when vine-shoots with the newly ripened grapes upon them were carried by well-born youths, appointed by all the tribes, in a foot-race from the ancient temple of Dionysus to a sanctuary of Athena by Phaleron, the old harbour. A festive procession, which followed, commemorated Theseus' return from

Crete, after he had liberated the Athenian youths and maidens from the Minotaur.

At the end of autumn, when the wine was first tasted, there were the Rural Dionysia—the oldest of all the feasts—throughout the country. The favourite sport was the *ascolia*, or dancing with one leg on greased bags of inflated goat's-hide. There were singing processions of the tribesmen to the altars of the god, where goats were sacrificed. Aristophanes in the *Acharnians* (240 ff.) depicts the wine-drinking, the songs, and the 'phallic' procession on these holidays in his own time.

In the following month (Gamelion) the people were regaled at the Lenaea, once the festival of the *Lenai*, an old forgotten name of the Attic Bacchantes, associated with Dionysus Eleuthereus—the god of Eleutherae just mentioned.

Next was the Anthesteria, a three days' festival, commencing with the broaching of wine-jars (*pithoigia*). On the second day the feast was known as Choes, 'the wine-cups.' Here the citizens, invited by the priest of Dionysus and assembled by the trumpet, sat separately, drinking the new wine in silence from cups wreathed with ivy. On the same day the 'queen' of the city—the wife of the 'king' Archon, to whom the priestly office

of the ancient 'kings' had descended—was betrothed to Dionysus in his old temple. The last day (the feast of the 'pots,' in which pulse was cooked) was consecrated to the dead and Hermes, their guide, with the idea that the ghosts came out when the earth opened in early spring. The ceremonies have, one and all, a primitive aspect. It may be that all three celebrations once belonged to the dead and the Earth-goddess: that the 'Anthesteria' (from *thes-*, to pray) was the feast of the 'evocation'; the *pithoi* were the earthen receptacles used for burial; the opening meant the release of the spirits. Their presence at the second day's feast suggests a real motive for those strange features, which Orestes¹ was called in to explain. It may serve even to throw some historical light on the Orestean legend itself, if we see in him a bloodguilty culprit arriving on the day of the dead and turned away from their feast.

The final festival was the Great, or City, Dionysia, in the spring.

We have but scanty evidence for the first stages in the development of the tragic drama through these Dionysian festivals, three of which

¹ See *Eumen.* 278. Cf. Verrall, J. H. S. xx., and Miss Harrison, *ibid.*; and 'Mythology and Monuments of Ancient Athens' (on the *aiora*). For the Lenaea, see L. R. Farnell, *Classical Rev.* xiv.

were historically associated with tragedy. In brief: it originated, according to tradition, at the Rural Dionysia, at which, in certain demes, both tragedies and comedies continued to be given after having been produced in the city. Its second home was the Lenaea, where Thespis at first brought out his plays under the patronage of Peisistratus. At this festival, tragedy, from the time when it was installed at the City Dionysia, tended to give way to comedy. The great spring festival was established by Peisistratus with a regular dramatic competition (*agôn*), in which Thespis took part, B.C. 535.

Aristotle's summary notice¹ is as follows:—

“Tragedy, as also Comedy, was at first mere improvisation. The one originated with the leaders of the dithyramb, the other with those of the phallic songs, which are still in use in many of our cities. Tragedy advanced by slow degrees; each new element that showed itself was in turn developed. Having passed through many changes it found its natural form, and there it stopped. Aeschylus first introduced a second actor; he diminished the importance of the Chorus, and assigned the leading part to the dialogue. Sophocles raised the number of actors to three, and added scene-

¹ *Poetics*, iv. 12 (transl. by Prof. S. H. Butcher).

painting. It was not till late that the short plot was discarded for one of greater compass, and the grotesque diction of the earlier satyric form for the stately manner of Tragedy. The iambic measure then replaced the trochaic tetrameter, which was originally employed when the poetry was of the satyric order, and had greater affinities with dancing. Once dialogue had come in, Nature herself discovered the appropriate measure. For the iambic is of all measures the most colloquial. We see it in the fact that conversational speech runs into iambic form more frequently than into any other kind of verse; rarely into hexameters, and only when we drop the colloquial intonation. The number of 'episodes' or acts was also increased, and the other embellishments added, of which tradition tells."

Aristotle, then, refers the origin of Athenian tragedy to improvised and ribald effusions taking by degrees a narrative form, associated with 'satyric' song and dance, and, in particular, with the dithyramb. The occasion (it is assumed) was, at first, the Rural Dionysia, and afterwards the Lenaea, till the drama was established in its mature form at the City Dionysia.

'Dithyrambos' is a term like 'Paeon' and 'Linos' (or Oitolinos), borrowed from a

hymn-refrain, *thurambe* or *thriambe*, which Pratinas coins into an epithet of Dionysus (thriambo-dithyrambe). The dithyramb belonged to him as the paean to Apollo; though among the Dorians of Sicyon and Megara it was chanted, early in the sixth century, in honour of their hero Adrastus.

'Satyri' or 'goats' was the Dorian name of the older demons of the field and forest, who were assembled round Dionysus. They had been from of old imagined as goat-like cobolds, and mimicked as such by rustic dancers wearing goat-skins and tails. The goat-type had passed from them to the Arcadian Pan, who was a great god in his own domain, but wore a countrified aspect in the Dorian towns.

The dithyramb was passing out of the rude stage of improvisation in the time of Archilochus (*circ.* B.C. 700). He describes the singer starting the 'fair strain, when his wit is kindled with the levin of wine.' In the third generation after him Arion, then at Corinth, adapted the song—which was no longer a mere monody with refrain—to the 'goats' (*tragoi*), or singers in satyr costume, and invented for them a 'satyric' or 'tragic' style of music and mimetic dancing: that is to say, it was Dionysian, full of the joy of wine, the reverse of the grave and stately

paean. His early training was in an Aeolian school at Methymna in Lesbos, where the lyre was used for poetry of the heart, such as that of Sappho and Alcaeus. Given such education and mastery of the flute music, which had then been elaborated for the dithyramb, it is certain that there was no licence, but strict musical method, in the new 'goat' chorus. It was ordered by rule throughout and 'strophic' in structure, the sections being probably arranged in triads—strophe, antistrophe, and epode—as in the later tragedy. It was called 'cyclic' either in reference to this rotation, or because the chorus wheeled round the altar (*thymele*). When the later chorus had been developed from it, the old name, 'goat-song' or 'tragedy,' survived as a reminder of its origin; while the dithyramb proper was gradually detached, losing the mimetic element, but keeping the tone and spirit of its predecessor: as such it held its place by the side of tragedy at the Great Dionysia and other festivals, and was pressed into the service of other gods besides Dionysus.

A 'leader' was plainly necessary, if only to regulate the movements of the dance; even the dancing described in Homer is 'led,' sometimes by expert 'tumblers.' If Aristotle's brief phrase, 'leading the dithyramb,' could

be taken as applying to Arion's chorus, his leader might be supposed to have chanted with the 'satyrs' in amoebean fashion, thus instituting a tragic dialogue. But here the tradition is quite indistinct. We have only late collateral evidence regarding the rise of this fashion: it appears, for example, in the *Theseus* of Bacchylides; he adhered to the older and simpler form, when the dithyramb was succumbing to the domination of the flute. Against this Pratinas protests in a splendid diatribe, where, it is well said, "the fervour of the language, and wild luxuriance of the versification, appear to reflect the very spirit of the old dithyrambic choruses."¹ It is known, at any rate, that the lyric element, as it stands in Greek tragedy, was of extraneous Dorian origin; for the Doric dialect of the dithyrambic 'goat-song' survived there, just as a literary variety of the Ionic remained the classical mould for Epic verse. Yet none of the tragic poets were Dorian except Pratinas, and he changed his abode from Phlius to Athens, gaining his fame there as a composer, dancer, and instructor.

With so much wanting in the evidence, even on the Dorian side, the Athenian development

¹ A. H. Haigh, 'The Tragic Drama of the Greeks.' See H. W. Smyth, 'Greek Melic Poets,' where the fragment is quoted.

of tragedy is difficult to trace. The satyr was not indigenous in Attica. There were kindred demons named Sileni, represented as half-horse, but capering and dancing like the 'goats.' Vase-paintings indicate a return to this type about the end of the fifth century.¹ But the Peloponnesian visitors left their name unmistakably in the afterpiece known as the *satyric* drama, of which Pratinas was reputed the founder or restorer. It was a travesty of some heroic legend, in which the chorus with its leader kept the character of 'goats' in their attire; so much is known from a fragment of one—the *Prometheus Purkæus* of Aeschylus—where the leader is addressed as 'goat,' and warned not to singe his beard (a goat's beard attached to his mask).

In this curious survival a further clue is looked for by connecting it with the Arionic dithyramb, on the assumption that the latter had reached the stage of dialogue.² It is suggested also that the sequence of four plays, known later as a 'tetralogy,' had its origin in four 'entrances' (*eisodoi*) of the chorus in as many different costumes, after each of which the leader recited; the 'satyr' costume being only used in the last piece, as a concession to

¹ K. Wernicke, 'Bockschöre u. Satyrdrama,' *Hermes* xxxii.

² See Wilamowitz, introd. to Eurip. *Heracles*, vol. i. (1889).

the popular taste or tradition. It is evident, however, that the 'short plot,' as Aristotle calls it, would as often be unfolded—when an actor had taken the leader's place—by changes of *his* dress or mask: indeed, the term *epeisodion*, down to the end of Aeschylus' career, connoted the entrance of a new personage. When the way was opened, by whatever means, for enlarging the material and adapting the chorus to a variety of themes, the original dithyrambic dance (*turbasia*) was confined to the 'satyr-play.'

In such a transition the first advance toward regular drama would be made by the adoption of the simple trochaic tetrameter, a metre suited to narrative and even to dialogue; it was retained in the matured tragedy for lively scenes, where a rapid descending rhythm was effective. At what time this came in is uncertain, but it appears as the metre of the poem of Archilochus just quoted. The iambic, an equally simple ascending rhythm, was brought in with it by the Ionian poets as a vehicle for personal reflections, precepts, or complaints. Such poems, however, were recited and learned by heart, especially when didactic or sententious, charged with the thoughts of a Simonides or a Solon on society and politics. The spirit of their own generation was thus

voiced for the educated Athenians in familiar, colloquial verse, at the same time that the Ionian rhapsodists continued to keep the people in mind of the legendary past.

To improve such recitation by means of simple dramatic delivery, and to link with it the Dorian lyric 'tragedy,' was the essay of Thespis of Icaria. If he was not the first to import the chorus in its artistic form, he made a new departure in appearing in person as an actor, delivering in his own Attic dialect a prologue and speeches, to which the chorus-leader responded for his troop in character, these dialogues leading up to new antistrophic songs and dances. The word 'tragedy' changed its meaning as the themes took a wider range; for the company, which was trained and supported by Thespis, travelled outside Icaria, the region of Dionysian fame. There were local legends to be worked up, while the heroic epos was known even in the country districts, through recitations, for instance, at the Attic Brauronia. After he and his chorus had been brought to Athens by Peisistratus, competitors arose, and the *agôn* was established. That the Thespian play, apart from song and dance, was effective and of serious interest, is shown by the fear which Solon expressed, that the acting would teach the citizens deception. Not much

can be gathered from the few extant titles, but one at least is significant: the *Eithei*. It was the word specially applied to the seven youths sent as tribute to the Minotaur: whence we may infer that the subject was Theseus in Crete, the love of Ariadne, the slaying of the monster, the rescue of the young victims.¹ Evidently the story was told chiefly in narrative, alternating with songs of lamentation and rejoicing, and mimetic dances, illustrative, for example, of the adventure in the Labyrinth. Choerilus, likewise, in the next generation, commemorated Alope, whose father, the brigand Cercyon, was slain by Theseus. She was beloved of him, and one of the Attic tribes bore her name. It was at this time that Theseus was being exalted into a rival of the Dorian Heracles by Athenian patriotism, which culminated when his remains were brought from Scyros by Cimon and he was installed as a divine 'hero' of Attica.

It was the policy of the enlightened prince Peisistratus, whose reign Aristotle calls the Athenian golden age, to make Athens the 'eye of Greece' in culture, and the political equal of Sparta. When the Homeric poetry had been collected at his instance for continuous recitation

¹ See P. Girard, 'Thespis et les débuts de la tragédie,' *Rev. des Études Grecques*, iv. (1891).

at the Great Panathenaea—the foundation of which is also ascribed to him—the step from ‘Homer’ to the drama might have been made directly. But such a drama would have been dull and unpopular. The city and the country-folk loved song and dance and romance. The Attic tragedy was thus raised from the first above commonplace realism. The poet was required to produce his personages from a world not less unreal and romantic than that of Dionysus and his satyrs. The men and women of legend lived again, and spoke intelligibly; but a large, imaginative presentation was ensured by the close union of the acting with the chorus.

Aeschylus—himself composer, trainer, and actor—appreciated and supplied what was needed in the dialogue: that it should be carried on between *two* persons both directly concerned in the action, thereby introducing the contrasts and play of opposing motives, which are necessary to true drama. The advantage is easily tested by comparing the conditions under which he constructed the *Persians*, with those imposed on Phrynichus, his elder contemporary, in his ‘historical’ plays. Simple as the former is in structure, it displays the character of the queen Atossa by confronting her with the humbled Xerxes; whereas Phrynichus could do no more than represent the suffering of the

Milesians and the tribulation at Susa by the lyrical wailing of the women in the captured city, and the wild Oriental despair of the Persian nobles, with a monotonous thread of narrative just sufficient for situations known beforehand to the audience.

Nevertheless Aeschylus, like Phrynichus (the disciple of Thespis), exerted his skill, acquired by lifelong professional training, in the invention of orchestric figures and gestures. He followed faithfully in the steps of a poet who could boast—

“Like to the infinite play of the moon-lit wrack on the
wind-swept
Sea, doth my fancy alert whirl in the waves of the
dance.”

On the other hand, his chorus was always given a real dramatic part. The chanting of the queen's councillors in the *Persians* is the means of evoking the dead, like that of the slave-women at the grave of Agamemnon. On the Theban maidens in the *Seven* rests the women's duty of prayer in battle. In the Argive trilogy the whole action turned on the fate of the maidens, who formed the chorus, and in the extant *Suppliants* the dramatic interest comes to a climax in their impassioned lyrical pleading. The main theme of the Promethean trilogy was worked out by the

chorus of Titans, the reconciled adversaries of Zeus.

We must suppose that the poet, as manager, arranged his 'cast,' especially for the trilogies, with careful regard to the actors' ability in singing, acting, and declamation respectively. On this assumption it is suggested¹ that in the *Oresteia* the first actor took the parts of Cassandra and Orestes, which require most musical skill and the highest histrionic capacity; the second actor played feminine rôles throughout, these being lengthy and important, but for the most part not lyrical; the third actor the rest, consisting chiefly of unimpassioned speeches.

¹ Wilamowitz, *Herakles*, p. 150 (1895).

II

THE ORESTEAN TRILOGY

THE twofold subject of the *Oresteia* is the deliverance of the house of Atreus from an ancestral curse, and the foundation of the Athenian council of the Areiopagus. The central figure, as the title of the Trilogy implies, is Orestes, son of Agamemnon, through whom the house was redeemed. The crowning event is the trial, before the Council, of the issue between Apollo, his advocate, and the Erinyes invoked by his mother, Clytemnestra, whom he had slain along with her paramour Aegisthus, in revenge for her murder of his father.

The germ was a simple tale of crime and retaliation, which is noticed incidentally in the *Odyssey*, and was set forth in a later epic (*Nostoi*, 'Return of the Heroes'), describing the adventures of the Greek chiefs after the Trojan war. But the main ethical feature of the story—Clytemnestra's appeal to the Erinyes, and their persecution of Orestes—was introduced by

Stesichorus, who added copious inventions of his own to the old legends, standing half way between the Epic and the deeper, self-conscious melic poetry. The retribution was now made to fall on Clytemnestra as well as Aegisthus, and Orestes could no longer be regarded as simply praiseworthy.¹ Aeschylus followed this version with little or no external difference. But he read it in the lurid light of other poems of Dorian origin, hostile to the old Achæan families, which dwelt on dark incidents in the past of the house: the treacherous murder of Myrtilus by Pelops, the murder of Chrysippus by his brothers Atreus and Thyestes, and that of Pleisthenes by Atreus, his father, the seduction of Atreus' wife, Aerope, by Thyestes, the slaughter of Thyestes' children.

If Aeschylus did not, like Sophocles,² explicitly trace back the curse to the age of Pelops (behind whom was Tantalus), there was enough in this succession of crimes to prove a fatal heredity: for instance, the seduction of Clytemnestra by Aegisthus, the son of the seducer, Thyestes, the immolation of his own child, Iphigeneia, by Agamemnon, whose father had cruelly slain his brother's children. This last incident, indeed, had been slurred over in

¹ *Od.* i. 298.

² *Elect.* 504 ff.

the feeblest production of the degenerate Epic, the *Cypria* of Stasinus, a writer whose foible was to excuse human sins and follies by laying them at the door of Zeus or Aphrodite. Iphigeneia, according to him, did not really die on the altar, but was miraculously wafted away to be the priestess of Artemis among the distant Tauri. Aeschylus took little from such sources beyond the outlines of the tales. Arctinus alone, among these effete composers, appears to have created manly types of character on the plane of the *Iliad*; his Memnon may well have inspired something of the warlike passion which breathes through the *Seven against Thebes*. Our poet did not concern himself with the fiction about Iphigeneia, nor even with the tales invented to give Artemis a grievance. Whatever the circumstances, the guilty motive was there, deepened by inherited depravity. He treated the story from first to last with a stern moral judgment, not the less strong because the background of ancestral guilt was narrowed. Such guilt, in his view, did but aggravate the moral evil, as it tended to vitiate the character and expose the soul to baneful temptation. Starting from the sober philosophy of the melic poets, and postulating the simple Homeric code—the primitive rules of reverence for oaths, for the stranger, the

suppliant, the poor—his ethical standard rose beyond the condemnation of overt perjury and impiety, and direct crimes against society. It rested securely on a pure Hellenic ideal of *Sôphrosune*, the virtue which is the outcome of intellectual discipline and habitual self-command. Its opposite is, in men, that rapacious selfishness which he repeatedly portrays in vivid imagery, throwing light into the inmost depths of the corrupt soul. In women, it is the morbid desire or insane impulse (*erôs aperôtos*), which he recalls in the legendary women, who slew husband, father, or child, and depicts at full in Clytemnestra.

In the Homeric notices Clytemnestra is no more than an accomplice. When Aeschylus ventured to invert the parts, making the wife the actual and only assassin, he was bound to assign a genuine human motive, working in a powerful, but coarse and hard, nature. It was not enough that, having given herself to Aegisthus, she had no better means of concealing her adultery and saving herself and her paramour; for Agamemnon was justly entitled to kill them both. It is shown from the outset that she had nursed for ten years an intense personal hatred of the man, as the unnatural murderer of her child. Living with her one deep-set purpose in the strength of Calchas' prophecy, she had

intrigued with Aegisthus, who would claim her and seize the throne in the event of Agamemnon dying in the field. But the time was running out. As the predicted return drew near, Aegisthus kept clear of the palace, leaving her a sword, with which to settle his own account. She would use it, with her own safer weapon, but she wanted no other aid.

It is made no less clear that this justifiable motive of hatred actuated a half-savage character which, combined with a ferocious strength of will, formed a type comparable with Olympias in the Macedonian age of despotism, when a woman's mastery, such as the poet imagines, had become possible in Greece. Such traits are, indeed, implied in one Homeric passage, where Agamemnon tells his own story among the dead:—"And most pitiful of all that I heard was the voice of the daughter of Priam [Cassandra], whom hard by me [or, on me] the crafty Clytemnestra slew. Then I strove to raise my hands as I was dying upon the sword, but to earth they fell. And that shameless one turned her back upon me, and had not the heart to draw down my eyelids with her fingers nor to close my mouth."¹ The kindred trait of sensuality is noted plainly in the drama, first, in her gloating over the woman's death as giving a

¹ *Od.* xi. 421-6 (Butcher and Lang's translation).

zest to her nuptials, and more decisively in the critical death-scene, where—forgetting her plea of provocation—she confesses to her love and excuses her indulgence of it. Aeschylus makes her, accordingly, a woman so utterly heartless as to mutilate the dead body, which she has huddled into the grave at night, as felons were buried. It is this brazen callousness which gives her nerve for the personal reception of the king in public. Half suspecting her, he succumbs at last to her rigid self-possession and calm, insistent mendacity. He cannot withstand her serene hypocrisy, her calculated fawning, and the garish eloquence which, like the gorgeous pomp around him, conceals her cold and deadly malice.

Yet, where the primary motive is not at work, the poet allows her human feeling. She has no interested spite, like the Sophoclean Clytemnestra, against her son.¹ Her forecast is, that Aegisthus will step in and assert himself as a 'tyrant' with a certain show of right. Orestes, being young, unknown, and without support, will perhaps come to terms, or he can be duly exiled. He will hardly take up the part of avenger, when his mother has thrown herself in the way. He will not be bound to

¹ According to Sophocles, Orestes was only rescued from her and Aegisthus by Electra, whom she therefore hates and persecutes to the verge of murder.

attempt Aegisthus' life at any cost, because he was not the actual murderer. Her own life he will not dare to take. As for Agamemnon, he was disabled in the grave, and his Erinyes might be kept at bay with regular offerings.

Unconscious of evil intention toward her son, she is startled by a fearful dream of a snake, as it were from the tomb, threatening her. Thinking only of Agamemnon, she proposes to lay the ghost by a belated offering at the grave. This must come from the family, and she entrusts it to his daughter, who is not in too open revolt. Before the tomb Electra hesitates, hardly venturing to pray to her father for death to the 'slayers.' Orestes himself is as reluctant. He needs to be goaded by the whole tale of atrocity, and when he confronts his mother, the scale is only turned by Pylades' warning. He is not, like the Orestes of Sophocles, a strong, resolute man, emboldened by his own sense of filial duty, and needing no prompting from the Delphic oracle. He has been urged to the deed by the god, and that with appalling threats. His own heart has shrunk from it, and remorse, bordering on madness, seizes him and leaves him helplessly dependent on the priestly means of absolution.

Thus the two principal characters are fashioned and balanced with one main object :

to represent adequately the issue between mother and son, the Erinyes and Apollo. Clytemnestra's act is not simply criminal; Orestes is only justified as he is overruled by Apollo, and only commendable as the god's humble and pious instrument.

Apollo's agency is ambiguous. How are we to regard his forcing of Orestes' conscience, his special pleading and strange ruling in favour of the father, his betrayal of Cassandra? The answer, it seems, must be sought in the unwritten history of the Delphic cult. The Apolline hierarchy had superseded an earlier religion, of whose spirit at least something may be recovered by inference.

We have one salient indication in Homeric allusions to the 'Pelasgic Zeus' of Dodona, whose priests went with unwashed feet and slept on the earth. This was the old oracle, which had witnessed and survived the rise of the Olympian pantheon. It was appropriated to Zeus, the lord of the sky. But the priests were none of his, and the oracles issued from a tree, which must have been haunted by spirits not of the air, but of the earth, whispering their secrets in confidence to priests in direct physical contact, night and day, with the earth and the ghostly underworld.

Again, there is the Delphic legend — on

which Aeschylus is devoutly silent—of Apollo slaying the ‘dragon,’ the guardian of the place. This is the serpent which witnessed on the tombs of oracular ‘heroes,’ or those whose power and virtue lay in the earth, such as Asclepius, who was slain by Zeus with a bolt from the sky because he had raised a mortal from the dead. Here is evidence of an earlier chthonic oracle, like that of Dodona, the one usurped by Apollo as the other by Zeus. As the primitive hermits of Dodona lingered on, so we may infer that the Pythoness at Delphi represents a succession of inspired women, whose office was dwarfed, when the oracle came to be managed, in the name of Apollo and Zeus, by a board of Hellenic nobles. Following this clue, we see in the story of Cassandra the history of the ‘Sibyl’—the woman with that faculty of divination, which the Greeks as well as the Teutons had discovered in the female sex—crushed out by the Delphic priesthood. The same jealousy, which denied honour and worship to women, is felt in Apollo’s ruling that the mother is naught, that the father’s blood alone runs in the child’s veins, that a mother’s blood may be shed by her son, provided he is absolved with that of a pig by a man ‘who expiates for bloodshed.’ The triumphant plea of Athena, that she was born

without a mother, reflects the same hostility. She herself is, in a sense, the counterpart of the Delphic divinity—another embodiment of the Hellenic masculine intellect imposing its ordinances with a quasi-sacerdotal authority.

While this lay 'Church' administered the 'sacred law,' which substituted rites of atonement for the obligation of the blood-feud, the Council of the Areiopagus—an older and indigenous institution at Athens—performed an analogous office, inasmuch as it maintained the sanctity of human life without the barbarous justice of private revenge. Though thoroughly civic in its constitution, it was no secular tribunal. It had its own divinity, giving to its verdicts as solemn a sanction as that of Delphi, in the 'Awful Goddesses' (Semnae) enshrined at its feet and invoked as 'Curses' (Aræ) to guard the oaths, on which hung the issue of life or death in trials for homicide. It had also, like the oracle, a voice in public and even private life, in matters concerning religion and the higher social duties; and it was entrusted with the revision of the administration, till its political jurisdiction was curtailed by the establishment of a new official board, the Nomophylakes. The scheme of the Trilogy brought together these two allied bodies. They were

equally venerable for the poet ; he did not question the Delphic priestcraft, and, like Solon, he had faith in the great Council as one of the anchors on which the State rode in safety.¹

A trial of Ares was commonly supposed to account for the foundation of the Council and for its name. Aeschylus substituted the trial of Orestes, using another legend to explain the title. By a far bolder invention he brought the Semnae into the actual trial. This involved a marvellous assumption, viz. that these old Athenian demons had previously been Erinyes, who came to prosecute Orestes, but had been detained by the influence of Athena, and persuaded to stay by the offer of an Athenian cult and temple, and so far to change their nature that they became 'benevolent' (the name by which they were called at Colonus), blessing the land and helping in marriage, as the Semnae did, so long as they received their dues. The Homeric Erinyes

¹ The Areiopagites, or those of the aristocratic *Ephetae*, who sat as judges of homicide on the Hill of Ares, had been constituted a Council by Solon and strengthened with an official element, viz., a quota of ex-archons, elected on their merits. But the archonship was reduced, under the democratic system of Pericles, to a petty paid office. Aeschylus glances (*Eumen.* 693 ff.) at these innovations, commenced by Ephialtes, B.C. 462. They had a general right to act for the people, in calling not only the magistrate, but any citizen, to account. The poet himself was summoned before them in consequence of an innocent allusion to Demeter, which caused an alarm of 'impiety' in the theatre.

had certainly no such attributes. They had nothing to do with blessing or cursing the land, nor with marriage. Neither did they sanction oaths: in the matter of the heinous sin of perjury men were responsible to Zeus, and the Olympians to the Styx. The curse, which they embodied, was not that which covered the judicial oath; it was the curse of the injured suppliant, or guest, or beggar. Nor was the Erinyes specially concerned in the punishment of homicide, for the Homeric usage was the primitive one, the condoning of bloodshed for a fine, with the alternative of pursuit and death, or permanent exile. Nor did she move in the world of the dead. If the fiction passed, it was because, however the vague province of the Erinyes had shrunk with the growth of civic authority, there yet remained the one form of murder which, even in Homer, brings them forth—the murder of a kinsman. And with this office of punishing bloodshed within the kin, on which the later conception of the Erinyes tended to concentrate, it was easy to associate the general supervision of trials for wilful murder. There was, lastly, the coincidence that the Semnae were called Arae in their judicial office, which suggested the other name Erinyes.

This strange confusion led Aeschylus to a

wonderful and terrible creation. These Erinyes were represented, not merely as ghostly witnesses to oaths, but as fiends punishing crime in the underworld. For there was now the inchoate idea of retributive justice in the grave, and a Hades no longer viewed as a dim region on the confines of Ocean, but as a vast cavernous dungeon beneath the earth, like the Hesiodic Tartarus, the prison of the Titans. It was this, which was visibly suggested by the apparition of the Erinyes with their lurid torches and their snakes; for the snake, being the symbol of the grave, implied that they persecuted the dead. The interchange, on the other hand, gave them the dignity of presiding, not only over the Athenian tribunal, but over the city. They are ranked with the Fates as powers governing the order of the world.

What, then, of the extraordinary issue in debate, raised by the deed of Orestes? Apollo, magnifying his own office, argues on behalf of Delphi that even a mother's blood can be expiated. The Erinyes reply that no purification with water or blood of swine can release the matricide from penalties, which were in their keeping before Zeus was born.

The ethical difficulty was not solved by this superficial Delphic casuistry. But history

or legend acquitted Orestes, and from the orthodox Apolline point of view he had the reward of his piety in relieving his house from the curse.

The Trilogy touches on two other sides of the Greek religion: the state of the dead, and the government of Zeus.

The veil is twice lifted on Hades; first, where we see Agamemnon in the *Choephoroe*, a sullen spirit, lacking his dignity, and then in the *Eumenides*, where Clytemnestra shows herself to the sleeping Furies, still bent on her vengeful purpose, complaining of the ghosts who scold and mock her. When we read the half-magical invocation of the dead king, we feel the presence of a being resentful and dangerous, if nothing more, powerful at least to vex and hurt the living with dreams, terrors, and omens. The homage which his children render to him, as a god, reminds us of the 'heroes'—among whom, in fact, he ranked—worshipped in sumptuous tombs and chapels, like those of Sparta, from which we have representations of the living family approaching the dead in reverent humility.¹ We see from the second stasimon of the *Agamemnon* that the honours of the tomb—the pomp and the laud—were not reserved for princes, as in the Homeric age: indeed the whole tone of that

¹ Illustration, p. 54.

homely elegy takes us to the sepulchral reliefs of the Cerameicus, which commemorated those who died prematurely, the good spearman or horseman, or the good housewife parting from her loom and her trinkets. We are far, at least, from the Homeric idea of a world, where Achilles himself confesses that he is of less account than a poor man's thrall on earth.

We have in the prayer of the *Agamemnon* the poet's latest thought¹ concerning Zeus. His conception must have been developed in the trilogy, of which the *Prometheus Bound* formed the second part, through the chorus of Titans in the concluding play. The burden of their songs was, we may assume, much the same as that of the Oceanides in the extant play:—¹

“May he, who all doth guide,
Even Zeus, ne'er pit his strength against our will.
May we ne'er fail, with righteous sacrifice
Of slaughtered oxen, to approach the deities
By our father Ocean's never ceasing tide.
And may our words be sinless still.
Be these thoughts firmly fixed in us, for ever to abide.

Sweet is it to pursue
One's long life in glad hopes and feed one's heart
Mid sunny joys; but shuddering we behold
How thou art agonised by tortures manifold,

¹ The *Oresteia* was produced B.C. 458, two years before the poet's death.

² Augusta Webster's translation.

Because, not keeping Zeus's will in view,
 But by thine own will taking part
 Thou gavest, Prometheus, to mankind an honour not
 their due.

See now, oh friend, how thankless was the grace.
 Say, where is aid? How helps the ephemeral race?
 And knewest thou not the puny, helpless kind,
 Idle as dreams,
 Which cramps that people to the light left blind?
 No, never can what Zeus has predestined
 Be crossed by mortal's schemes.

And this, Prometheus, have we surely known,
 Seeing thy mournful fate. And now the tone
 Of a far other song seems to us sped
 Than the bridal strain
 We sang around the bath, around the bed,
 When Hesione our sister with thee wed,
 Whom thy rich gifts did gain."

The purpose of this Trilogy was to exhibit the Athenian Prometheus—the potters' patron—as the friend of uncivilised man in the fore-time, when Zeus had come of age, and Gaia (Earth), employing her prophetic foresight in his service, had aided him to put down the Titan dynasty, her first uncouth children, by enlisting against them their stronger brethren, the hundred-handed Giants. Prometheus was one of the unruly Titans, but he had his mother's 'forethought,' and with it inventive genius. He went over to Zeus,

I THE RISE OF GREEK TRAGEDY

and so was left free, when Kronos and the rest were imprisoned in Tartarus. He was moved by his kindliness to resist Zeus, whose first ambitious purpose was to kill off the groveling human race and create another in his own superior image. Prometheus had the better thought of raising them by giving them, first, fire and then numbers, navigation, augury, and other useful arts, as Demeter gave them through Triptolemus the art of ploughing, and as the Olympians, when Zeus had begotten a family, gave them higher arts, such as music and poetry and the palaestra. But the friend of humanity had to pay for his kindness, because Zeus was jealous, like all the Olympians, and grudging in respect of any privilege: as such he regarded fire, which Prometheus stole from the sky. The story of his punishment, in the extant play, is used simply to exhibit a great character—the immortal, whose ‘Titanic’ courage and will defied physical pains, the benefactor nobly suffering for the grudge of a jealous Olympian god. The issue, however, was not the obvious one or right against might, but one far more subtle and more dramatic. Prometheus had been blinded, for all his forethought, by his headstrong and haughty temper, to refuse to treat with Zeus, when the Titan rebellion was still

smouldering, and the new king, amid the tumult, had arrested him as the possessor of a certain secret, on which his stability depended. He sought to bend the will of Zeus rather than submit his own, and in this recusant mood underwent aeons of torment. [At this point the extant part of the drama ends.] Meanwhile Zeus, deeming himself secure on his throne, had released the other Titans and his father Kronos. They pointed the way (with 'suasion,' perhaps, such as Athena's, when she prevailed with the Furies) to a change of his overweening temper, and prepared for his deliverance through Heracles and the wounded Centaur, Cheiron, who, by dying and so foregoing his own privilege, reimbursed Zeus sufficiently for the theft of fire.

It is true, of course, that the treatment of Prometheus was not just; but there was nothing in this picture of the divine jealousy which would shock the Greek religious sense.

Aeschylus—except when he strayed toward metaphysics and looked for Zeus in the limbo of 'ether' or the 'universe'¹—thought as a religious poet, going direct to the intuitions of humanity, recognising in God and Man alike only what is actual—will, character, personality—but rising to the largest imaginative

¹ Fragm. 295, Dindorf.

view in his conception of the Divine. He ascribed to Zeus a vast pervading potency in the moral world, such as he attributes to Aphrodite in the world of 'nature':¹—

“The lovesick earth
Welcomes in seasonable dalliance
Chaste Heaven's wound ; soft on her yearning breast
His dewy kisses pour, and she conceives
Fat pasture and Demeter's bread for men,
And quickened from her moist embrace betimes
The greenwood burgeons : such my ministry.”

Thus reading the popular myths, he saw through them a living and moving Power, whose government was not likely to pass away—a god whose rule was strong and fair toward his peers, so that no more rebellion was to be expected. As Zeus showed himself wiser in the long run than Man's ambitious friend, he is assuredly wise enough for us. We must school ourselves to a reasonable submission, regarding pain as a discipline from which not even Titans, much less men, are exempt, and making the most of the Olympian boons, which brighten our earthly life while it lasts.

This is a conception of a personal government over gods and men somewhat too wide, as indeed he confesses,² for his mythological

¹ *Fragm.* 38, Dindorf.

² *Agam.* 160-66.

framework. But Aeschylus did not stand wavering on the border between religion and philosophy. He had learned from thinkers such as Anaxagoras and Pythagoras to look deeper than the myth, or to fill it out with ethical abstractions—Justice, Fate, and the like. But no rationalism dispelled his waking vision of the world of gods and heroes. It was more real for him than for his predecessors, the Epic poets. They came at the end of the outworn Achæan tradition. He felt the larger faith, which had dawned in the Delphic inspiration, the Eleusinian piety, the Dionysian joy of life.

THE ORESTEAN TRILOGY

THE ORESTEAN TRILOGY

AGAMEMNON

WATCHMAN.

A LIVELONG loathly year⁽¹⁾ I have prayed Heaven
To end me this dog's watch, while here abed
With Atreus' hoary housetop cuddling cold,⁽³⁾
From rise to set I have perused yon stars
In conclave o'er the spangled firmament,
Bright-crown'd majesties, who train to earth
Winter and summertide.⁽⁷⁾ Still on my post
I wait a fiery token,⁽⁸⁾ which shall light
From Troy the timely rumour of her fall.
Plague on this tyrant fancy,⁽¹¹⁾ that hath taken
My lady's lording heart ! Oft on my couch—
This dank uneasy bed, that hath for me
No spell of gadding dreams ; for slumber bilks me
And terror stares upon me, lest I shut
Mine eyelids past all waking⁽¹⁵⁾—whensoever
I think to purge my sleepy pate with song,
Humming or whistling, as I shred⁽¹⁷⁾ the dose,
I fall to poorly sobbing for our goodman
And goodly occupation gone to bad.
Tut, tut ! No firedrake be it, that doth house,
Mocking my scurvy watch, in yonder murk !

All hail, thou flame,⁽²³⁾ that darkling usherest
 Dayspring and ample jubilee of choirs,
 Which Argos⁽²⁴⁾ shall array for this success !
 Huzza !
 Hark ! 'Tis no faltering signal in thine ear,
 Fair queen ! Haste thine uprising and acclaim
 With matin joyance⁽²⁹⁾ of the women's tongues
 Yon ruddy pursuivant, who blazons me
 Proud Ilion's defeat. Nay, I will tread
 A prelude privily.⁽³¹⁾ My master's luck
 I score to mine account ; 'tis treble-sice⁽³³⁾
 Yon beacon-play has thrown me. Ah my lord,
 Thy household all impatient waits thy coming
 With welcome in our hands, that itch for thine.
 The rest is hush, all hush ; a lumping ox
 Hath poizèd down my tongue.⁽³⁶⁾ My bedfellow
 Would voice it plain enough, if stones could speak.
 My closet he shall ope, who hath the key ;
 To them who know not I'm a dummerer.

[*Exit.*

Chorus.

Ten long years ago the doughty
 Atrid pair impleading⁽⁴¹⁾ Priam,
 Peers by grace of Zeus dividing⁽⁴³⁾
 Throne and sceptre,
 Menelaus and his iron
 Argive yokemate, Agamemnon,
 Sped their host, a thousand galleys,
 On the war-path from our land,
 Screaming fierce their bloody challenge,
 Like to vultures, lorn and wildered,
 As they wheel above the lonely

Nest afloat on oary pinions,⁽⁵²⁾
Heaven's pilgrims,⁽⁵⁷⁾
Wailing brood and nurs'ry lost.
Surely one on high—Apollo,
Pan or Zeus⁽⁵⁶⁾—shall hear the shrilling
Plaint of birds and send Erinyes⁽⁵⁹⁾
To require the robbers' doom.
So were sent on Alexander⁽⁶¹⁾
Atreus' sons by Zeus, the puissant
Lord of guest-right. He to Trojan
And to Danaan appointed
For that leman lightly wedded
Spousal-rite⁽⁶⁵⁾ of war, uncourtly
Bouts of battle, stiff encounter,
Shock of knapped spears and stubborn
Knees upon the dust.—Their doings
Are accounted ; yea, the fatal
End ensueth, nor shall guileful
Wat'ry eyes and mock libations⁽⁶⁹⁾
Cheat the vengeance that relenteth
Ne'er for altar-flame defiled.⁽⁷⁰⁾

We, whose scot is paid, belated
Waifs of war, are left,⁽⁷⁴⁾ upholding
Thews outworn upon our stadles,
Last support of ling'ring childhood.
Wintry eld, all sere and leafless,
With a weakling's strength and vigour
Puny as the sap that quickens
Stripling bosoms,
Ares' leaguer empty yet,
Though its feet are three,⁽⁸⁰⁾ unmanly
Goeth falt'ring
Like a day-lit dream, to die.

Say, Tyndareos' royal daughter,⁽⁸³⁾
 Clytemnestra, what betideth ?
 What is bruited, or what missive
 Hath availed, that all the city
 With thy service is astir ?
 Altars of our every guardian
 God in heaven and hell, the welkin
 And the market,⁽⁹⁰⁾
 Are aflame with sacrifice,
 Fragrant fires from every quarter
 Soaring skyward,
 Fed with innocent caressing⁽⁹⁴⁾
 Of the virgin unction, massy
 Drops⁽⁹⁶⁾ from forth the regal store.
 Speak, if nothing lets thy message,
 Words of healing as thou mayest,
 For presageful
 Drear awhile besets my spirit,
 And my heart is sorrow's ravin ;
 Then, enkindled from yon altars,
 Smiling hope outbraves the gloom.

Forasmuch as the remnant of my years is yet instinct with tuneful breath divine,⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ I am charged to tell of those hale warriors and the favour that encouraged their marching ; how they who share the Achæan throne,⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ the twain consorted princes of Hellas' chivalry, wielding their spears of vengeance, were sped unto the Teucrian land by birds of mettle, the one black, the other argent behind. In station⁽¹¹⁶⁾ manifest they alighted hard by the palace, the kingly fowl before the kings of the fleet, devouring a hare's body big with her brood, on the spear hand, where

COIN OF AGRIGENTUM



"Twain, like our sovereign pair,
Eagles appeared, and a hare;
Swift on the prey they were darting"

they foreslowed her running. (Ailinson ! Ailinson !⁽¹²¹⁾ Weal better woe !) And the good seer of the host marked and divined of those glutton birds and the two sons of Atreus paired in their brave feather,⁽¹²²⁾ commanding the march and at one in warlike mood, and thus he expounded the sign :

“In the doomsday of Priamos’ town ye shall e’en make your havoc ; yea, all the fatness of the Phrygian⁽¹²⁸⁾ folk and their flocks shall escheat to the spoiler. But ware ye that no jealousy of Heaven o’ercast your mighty leaguer, that is forged betimes for Troia’s gyving. For Artemis in her virgin ruth disdaineth those winged hounds of her sire, who slay a wretched motherly hare with young unborn ; yea, she abhorreth your eagles’ feasting. (Ailinson ! Ailinson ! Weal better woe !) O goddess fair !⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ How pleasant soever thou art to the rude yeanlings of fierce lions and suckling whelps of every wildwood beast, yet vouchsafe and refuse not our moiety of luck in yon birds’ appearing half untoward. Harken thou also in thy healing name, O Paian,⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ lest she vex the Danaan fleet with wasteful, hindering winds and ensue withal a strange sacrifice⁽¹⁵¹⁾ unlawful and unclean, which shall be as a loveless and adulterous feast of feud ; for the house doth husband vengeance, that keepeth guileful record of children’s blood⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ against a dread resurrection.” Such doom the seer shrieked and ample boons therewith, foretold of the wayside fowl. Welaway ! Sing Ailinson ! Ailinson ! Weal better woe !

Zeus, whosoe’er he is, I bespeak in simple wise, if such address be pleasing unto him ; there is none other name, though I ponder all, nor cognisance of my imagining, save Zeus, which shall surely discharge my

spirit of this heaviness.⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ The mighty one of yore for all his fulsome valour is quite fordone and forgotten, and the heir of his power was thrice thrown⁽¹⁷¹⁾ betimes and went his way. But his shall be a plenished wit, who acclaimeth Zeus with a glad and loyal voice of triumph. He hath set the lode of wisdom in suffering and guideth men's feet in the way thereof.⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ Even in sleep the heart reviveth her festered sores⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ and the spirit is chastened unaware. For God, I trow, sitteth stately at the helm, and his mercy beareth us hard.

So the Achaeans' elder admiral defied not the buffeting of fate nor gainsaid the seer at all, what time upon Aulis' swirling race⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ the host lay wind-bound and famished from day to drouthy day, men foundering adrift, ships and cables ruining and the flower of Argos shredded to waste, while the tempest swept across Chalcis from Strymon's shore.⁽¹⁹³⁾ Now when Calchas parleyed weirdly of Artemis with the chiefs and spake a counterspell that e'en mocked the stormwind's cruelty, the sons of Atreus smote their staves on the ground⁽²⁰²⁾ and wept incontinently; but the elder prince found voice withal and cried: "To disobey were grievous as death, and grievous 'twill be, if I slay my daughter, the jewel of my house, defiling my hands with runlets of my child's young blood about your altar. Evil is on either side. How shall I forsake my fleet and break mine alliance? So be it; 'tis no wrong that they fondly lust for a maiden victim's life to bate the winds." So he stiffened his neck to the yoke, and hell-ward his spirit veered in the way of wickedness. From that hour his wit was turned to unhallowed act; for a wilful delusion was

THE SACRIFICE OF IPHIGENEIA.



G. F. 1865

"But the saffron livry fluttered
Downward from her drooping head,
And her wistful visage uttered,
Like a picture words unsaid."

From a photograph by Alinari.

on him, which seareth shame and waxeth as a canker of sin in mortal hearts. And he consented to shed her blood for the wedding ⁽²²⁶⁾ of his warships and the recovery of his losel fere.

Naught recked that hotspur assize of her thin girlish breath ⁽²²⁸⁾ and sobbing of a father's name. When the litany was done, he beckoned the henchmen, and they hoisted her like a kid upon the altar, faint unto death and closely swathed about ; and straitly they gagged her beauteous mouth to stint her crying, lest she curse the house. But her weed of saffron ⁽²³⁹⁾ streamed on the ground, and she smote her slayers every one with the pitiful quivering of her eyes, looking as it were a painted presence ⁽²⁴¹⁾ fain to speak unto them ; forasmuch as her modest, daughterly voice had oft graced the men's banquet in loving-kindness at her sire's goodly board, when they sang the paeon ⁽²⁴⁶⁾ and poured the wine of blessing.

I saw not and declare not the rest ; but the wisardry of Calchas was not belied. Howbeit in the scale of justice shall your knowledge be meted with pain. ⁽²⁵⁰⁾ But now is forecast untimely ; 'twere like a very surling to challenge the morrow's message. ⁽²⁵¹⁾ 'Twill come full clear with the rays of dawn. And for the event, well be it and well-pleasing to this poor sentry, that standeth in the door of Apis' land. ⁽²⁵⁶⁾

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.

Leader of the Chorus.

In homage, Clytemnestra, to thy power
Behold us here ! For while the kingly chair ⁽²⁶⁰⁾
Is void, the consort of our noble chieftain

Commands our duty. Say, or hold thy peace
 If thou had'st liefer—but we fain would know,
 Hast thou some goodly news, or is it hope
 Whose fanciful perfume doth fill our shrines?

Clyt. Now may the morning, as the adage hath it,
 Harbinger kindness⁽²⁶⁵⁾ from her mother night!
 I'll glad your ears with that which passes hope:
 Our Argive host hath taken Priam's city.

Chor. How say'st? My doubting ears scarce caught
 thy speech.

Clyt. Troy is our own! Now speak I plain enough?

Chor. Yea, joy's surprise hath tempted forth my tears.

Clyt. 'Tis well thine eyes confess thy loyalty.

Chor. But hast thou worthy proof to warrant it?

Clyt. Oh doubt it not, or deem it Heaven's deceit!

Chor. Art thou enrapt then by some glozing dream?⁽²⁷⁴⁾

Clyt. Ye shall not tax my wit with slumbering.

Chor. Or hath some wingless⁽²⁷⁶⁾ rumour tickled thee?

Clyt. Ye twit me as I were a thoughtless girl.

Chor. And what strange hour hath seen the city's fall?

Clyt. The selfsame night whereof yon day⁽²⁷⁹⁾ is born.

Chor. Prithee, what messenger could post so fast?

Clyt. Hephaestus launched a radiant signal forth,
 Which ran in swift relays of courier⁽²⁸²⁾ flame.
 Ida despatched it first to Hermes' bluff⁽²⁸³⁾
 O'er Lemnus' waters, thence huge Athos, mount
 Of Zeus, received the giant torch ablaze.
 Coursing in strength—so high the rosined pile
 Surmounted yon wide sea—that swiftfoot light
 Swept gaily brushing o'er the level brine,
 And to Macistus' summit,⁽²⁸⁹⁾ like a sun,
 Announced its golden splendour. He nor dozed
 Nor dallied with his serviceable task.

Far shot the blaze and by Euripus' flood
Challenged Messapion's guards,⁽²⁹⁸⁾ who answer-
ing sped

The message, mirrored in a flaring heap
Of hoary heather. Swift athwart the gloom
The beacon crossed Asopus' plain, as 'twere
A moonlit wrack, and from Cithaeron's crags
Flung yet another tale of missive fire ;
For greeting its bright advent, nothing loth,
Their watch uplit a larger hoard than all.
Beyond Gorgopis' bay it soared and shone,
And climbing Aegiplanctus lingered not,
Nor respited the fiery ordinance.

Full soon his vigorous fuel threw aloft
A mighty beard of flame, whose instant sheen
Vanquished the headland high o'er Saron's gulf
In one brave leap to Arachnaeus' cliff.

Then from his watch, that marches with our
town,

To Atreus' royal eyrie flew apace
The lineal child of Ida's parent flame.

So was my lamp-race ⁽³¹²⁾ ordered ; each to each
The rival fires succeeded, but the prize
Was his, who ran from first to last alone.⁽³¹⁴⁾

Thus passed my lord's announcement unto me
From Troy.⁽³¹⁶⁾ Behold his token and my proof !

Chor. I will not long default my grateful vows
To Heaven. But prithee, madam, speak again,
Enlarge the pregnant marvel of thy tale.

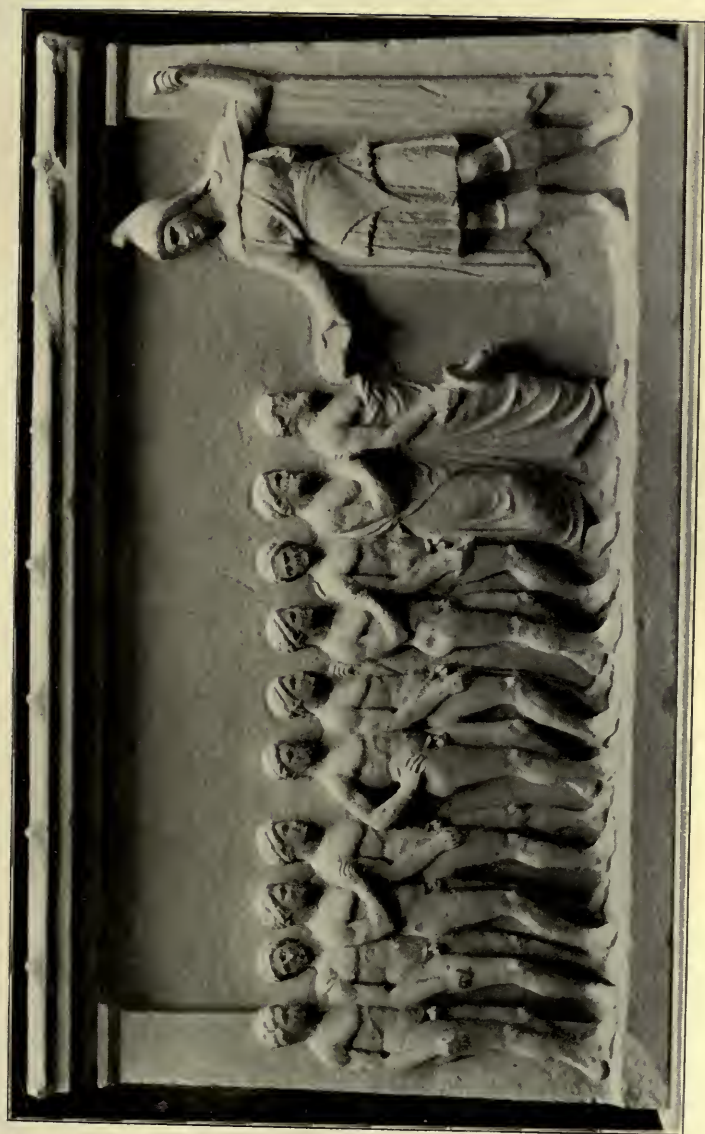
Clyt. Hark ye, this day the Achaeans are in Troy.
Oh, 'tis a dulcet discord ye may hear
Within yon burgh, a feud of vinegar
And oil, that sourly wrangle in one cup !

Conquered and conquerors together noise
 Their twofold plight in accents twain. For they,
 Sisters and wives, are bending o'er their dead
 Downcast, and wretched children, grovelling
 Upon their greybeard sires, make caitiff moan.
 Ours, spent with yesternight's arrear of toil,
 Have catered from the city's hoard and break
 Their fast with errant chance for ballotin,⁽³³²⁾
 Of tale and token free ; householders all
 Of that abasèd city and discharged
 From their dank dungeon 'neath the frosty sky,
 They'll drowse their time and heed no watch-
 word more

Save "merry dreams"! Sooth, if they disregard
 Nor shrine nor god of all that kept the town
 And owned the conquered land, then may they
 not

Of their rich seizure be disseized. But ware
 Lest itch of lucre turn our soldiery
 To sacrilegious deed. Of their return
 They have no warranty ; the backward limb
 Is yet to run or e'er they win the goal⁽³⁴⁴⁾
 Of this adventurous race. Yea, though our host
 Escape the gods' attainder and no hurt
 Befall incontinently, yet the dead⁽³⁴⁶⁾
 Are keeping sullen watch upon their path.
 'Tis but a woman's warning in thine ear.
 God keep us in the fickle poise of luck,
 And do my manifold and dear desire !

Chor. Lady, thy pleasant words are e'en discreet
 As any man's. Seeing thy proofs are sure,⁽³⁵²⁾
 I will rehearse my homage to the gods,
 Whose guerdon hath well recompensed our pains.



"So was my lamp-race ordered."

Chorus.

Sovran Zeus and night, well-laden
Argosy of glories, hail !
Friendly night, that o'er their towers
Flungest wide the toils of thraldom,
Ruin's web of His contrivance,
All-imprisoning ; neither stalwart
Man nor nimble lad o'erleaped it.
Honour to the lord of guest-right !
Lo, the shaft whilere on Paris
Stedfastly was bent, nor fluttered
O'er the stars,⁽³⁶⁴⁾ nor fell untimely
From the hand of mighty Zeus.

Zeus hath hit them ; 'tis sooth confessed nor far to trace. They have fared even as He ordained. Let a wight aver that Heaven deigneth not to heed, though mortals tread upon the beauty of holiness : 'tis an ungodly conceit and plain belied in the seed of the defiant and rebellious, whose house hath waxed overweening in rank excess. Be thine the painless way and thy sufficiency a wholesome wit ; for in riches hath the worldling no fortress, who doth grossly spurn and dash in pieces the pillared seat of Justice. The cruel temptress, that is instinct of Até her mother,⁽³⁸⁵⁾ overbeareth him ; he is forsaken utterly, when perdition stareth on him as a balefire alight. He is discovered in the trial like to bad bronze, when 'tis rubbed and touched. With bruise and blood the flighty runagate hath cumbered his city in chase of birds on the wing.⁽³⁹³⁾ He findeth no mercy in Heaven, and all his evil-doing perisheth.

In such haviour went Paris to make rapine of a

wife and shame the Atroids' ⁽⁴⁰⁰⁾ hospitable hearth and board. A hurtling of spear and shield and a harnessing of men and galleys she left for her burghers, what time she flitted softly through the gate and took death to Ilion for the ruinous dower of her naughtiness. And their prophets ⁽⁴⁰⁹⁾ would oft mutter the burden of the house: "Alack! alack for our lord in his dwelling! Alack the bed that her tenderness imprinted! Yonder is but the wraith ⁽⁴¹²⁾ of a king in his palace, demeaned upon his lonely seat and tonguetied for yearning after her, who tarrieth beyond the sea. Because love is no more, that was the shapemsmith of her comely statues, their amorous eyes are void ⁽⁴¹⁸⁾ and loathly. And they are but mournful ⁽⁴²⁰⁾ mockeries of the night, that fondly wait on him with a wanton conceit of joy; for lo! the wingy presence hath straightway flown from his arms and pursueth in the train of sleep."

Sorrow dwelleth indeed at his hearth, and heavy withal is the general tale thereof; for since our warships fared from all the land of Hellas, there is bitter wringing of hearts, yea, in every home a manifold smart. Each knoweth his own whom he sent, and cognisance none returneth save an urn and ashes for remembrance. Full many a grievous load of moan hath Ares bestowed in our hands; for he poiseth his scale ⁽⁴³⁷⁾ in the affray of spears, and refineth not gold but charnel dust in guerdon of flesh. And here they wail for a good swordsman fallen, and there they weep that he fought and bled for another's fere. 'Tis a fretful whisper of discontent that gathereth against the sons of Atreus, to arraign our impleaders. ⁽⁴⁴⁹⁾ And for the rest, their lordly shapes are right lordly laid in



"They mourn a warrior tried."

the graves they have won them around Ilion's wall.⁽⁴⁵⁵⁾
'Tis a heavy count our kings have cast with the city ;
the voice of her anger reciteth a people's ban ⁽⁴⁵⁸⁾ upon
them. My heart is rumouring me darkly, forasmuch
as Heaven watcheth the man of blood ; the days of
his losel luck are foredone and pale is the remnant
thereof, when the black Erinys maketh a shadowy
grave for his pride and his power. A fearful thing is
a fulsome renown ; the levin lighteth upon it from
the eye⁽⁴⁷⁰⁾ of Zeus. I desire the weal that is un-
begrudged ; no waster of towns would I be, nor yet
live downcast beneath a master's eye.

Hark ! This jubilant beacon hath thrilled the town
with sudden rumour ; who knoweth if it be true or
some god's deceit ? What babe or dizzard would
suffer his heart to be heated at the first surprise of it,
and dashed anon when denial ensueth ? It beseemeth
a woman's mettle ⁽⁴⁸³⁾ to plight her fancy to the mirage
of joy. 'Tis light trespassing o'er the pale of her
credulity ; her reporting hath life e'en as short as
her wit.

Soon shall we know, if 'twas a true despatch
Writ in those flaming signals of the night,
Or but the cheating joyance of a dream
That hath bewitched our sense. Yonder I see
A herald faring from the beach, his brow
O'erdight with olive-sprays.⁽⁴⁹⁴⁾ Our dry-foot
dust,
Close marching with her web-foot brother,⁽⁴⁹⁵⁾
vows

Yon wight will pass thee no mute fiery sign
With reek of forest fuel, but pronounce

A "welcome" ⁽⁴⁹⁸⁾ naught equivocal, or else—
 But I am loath to speak the contrary.
 May this fair advent e'en conclude as fair.
 Whoso gainsays our prayer, upon his head
 Be all the fruit of his disloyalty.

Enter the HERALD.

Her. Hail to my fathers' hallowed Argive soil !
 Now in this tenth bright year I come to thee
 With many a broken hope, but one upheld.
 Ne'er thought I here in my own fatherland
 To die and win a homely burial.
 Welcome, dear earth ! Welcome, fair peep of
 day,
 And Zeus enthroned in Argos, and our lord
 Of Pytho, whose fierce shafts are turned away
 From us.⁽⁵¹⁰⁾ Enough upon Scamander's plain
 We felt thy cruelty ; be thou henceforth
 Our saviour and our healer, O my liege
 Apollo ! All yon conclave ⁽⁵¹³⁾ I bespeak,
 With Hermes, my dear patron, worshipful
 Herald of heralds.⁽⁵¹⁵⁾ Heroes all who sped us,
 Now greet and bless this remnant of our host
 Saved from the spear. Oh don your royal
 pride,
 Ye lovely halls, ye chairs ⁽⁵¹⁹⁾ august ! Ye gods
 Of orient aspect, now with rare regard
 Of sunbright eyes ⁽⁵²⁰⁾ receive in proper pomp
 Too long belated his high majesty,
 Whose coming harbingers for you and all
 This folk a light in darkness ; greet aloud
 King Agamemnon, by whose valorous heft
 Zeus' lawful axe hath lightly shattered Troy

And throughly delved her champaign,⁽⁵²⁶⁾ laid
in dust

Her altars and her stablished shrines, and killed
Outright the seed of life from all the land.

Yea, she is humbled 'neath the heavy yoke
Of our full-fortuned worthy, elder heir
Of Atreus, who returns of all the world
Most rightfully renowned. Our count is closed
With Paris and his guilty partnership ;
A large reprisal he hath paid us, cast
For theft and rapine,⁽⁵³⁴⁾ all his wager clean
Escheated, Priam's ancient house and land
Amerced for him with double forfeiture
And ruinously swept away as chaff.

Chor. Good morn and welcome, herald of our host !

Her. Yea, 'tis God's morn ; welcome were death
to-day.

Chor. Wast thou so heartsick, pining for thy land ?

Her. Mine eyes outwell their joy upon her face.⁽⁵⁴¹⁾

Chor. Then ye had comfort of your malady.

Her. How so ? I pray thee, school me in thy parle.

Chor. Your heartache we requited from our hearts.

Her. I take thee ; 'twas a fair exchange of sighs.

Chor. Nay, 'twas a long-drawn sighing of despair.

Her. What means this cold affront of sullenness ?

Chor. Silence, I trow, is mischief's antidote.

Her. Some terror lurked behind the empty throne ?

Chor. E'en as thou said'st, death was our heart's desire.

Her. Sooth, 'tis well ended. Speak we fortune fair
For what hath fair befallen in these long years.
And for the untoward time—nay, save the gods,
Who lives for ever and a day unscathed ?
Were I to tell of weary bivouac,

Bare scraggy beds on deckways,⁽⁵⁵⁵⁾ hour on
hour

Disconsolately chronicled in groans,
And scurvy dogholes, when we slept our turns
Before the scowling battlements, with dew
Thick overhead and Trojan meadow-damp
Dripping unwholesome mildew on our clothes,
Clamming our hair to shag ; or were my tale
Of cruel winter, when the birds were nipt,
Of Ida's savage snow, or sultry days,
What time the sea upon its noontide couch
Was drowsing soft and still—But wherefore
mourn ?

The soreness is o'erpast alike for us
And for our sluggard comrades in their graves ;
So let it sleep with them !⁽⁵⁶⁸⁾ 'Tis foolishness
For living wights to calculate the lost
And smart afresh for fate's malignity.
Enough ! I cry a loud and long farewell
To grief. For us, the last of Argos' host,
No mulct doth counterpoise our gross excess
Of gain. Go, winged angels of our fame,⁽⁵⁷⁶⁾
O'er land and sea, and vaunt to yon bright orb :
"Behold at last the spoils of ruined Troy,
Heirloom and pride of Hellas, hung by right
Of Argive chivalry in Argive fanes !"
Whene'er this glory goeth, men shall praise
City and chiefs, and recompense the grace
Of Zeus for his achievement. I have done.

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.

Clyt. Yesternight, when my fiery messenger
First bruited Ilion's heavy overthrow,

The anthem of my joy went up anon.
Full many flouted me : " Anent yon fires
Thy fancy hath alit a burning Troy.
'Tis e'en the way of women, giddiheads
Flown with their silliness." So was I chidden.
Howbeit I sacrificed, and sister choirs
Throughout the burgh in many a holy station
Shouted their glad responses, while they fed
The fragrant smouldering altar.⁽⁵⁹⁷⁾ But
enough !

The king's approach cuts off more circumstance.
His own recital shall suffice for me.
Look you, my heart is urgent to prepare
An ample welcome for my reverend lord
In the hour of his returning. Oh ! what morn
Smiles fairer on a wife than when the gates
Are opened for her spouse, by Heaven's grace
Saved from the battle-field ? Go, tell him thus :
" Haste to thy city thou, her darling pride,
To find thy lady as thou leftest her,
A very faithful watch-dog in thy house,
Faithful to thee, the foe of all thy foes,
Herself unchanged withal, and every seal⁽⁶⁰⁹⁾
Through thy long absence kept inviolate.
Nor joy of other man, nor lewd report
Hath touched me more than dyeing toucheth
bronze."⁽⁶¹²⁾

Lo, my self-praise is all fulfilled with truth,
And shameth not a modest lady's tongue.

[Exit.

Chor. Fair words thine ears have caught, and fair, if
they⁽⁶¹⁵⁾

Interpret to thee clear, thy wit will catch.

But what of Menelaus, herald ? Say,
Comes he, our land's beloved ruler, safe
From all his peril with your company ?

Her. 'Twere brief and barren profit, good my friends,
Did I possess you but of pleasant lies.

Chor. Would thou hadst tidings fair and true withal !
But false and fair is patchery confessed.

Her. Your prince, he and his galley, in sad truth
Are lost and vanished from the Achæan host.

Chor. Loosed he from Ilion in your sight, or strayed
In some fell storm that wildered all the fleet ?

Her. Alas ! Too deftly thou hast hit the mark,
And briefly voiced a woful history.

Chor. What rumour of him passed around the fleet ?
Was he accounted with the quick or dead ?

Her. Clearer avouch is none ; ask Helios,
From whom earth's every creature draweth life.

Chor. What was this tempest that befell our ships ?
How brake such wrath unearthly and surceased ?

Her. I would not slur a favourable day
With sinister report ; for Heaven eschews
Divided homage. When your messenger
Brings a mere burden of disaster rank
Writ on his doleful brow, an army fallen,
One wound of bleeding war for all the burgh
And one for every stricken house, devote
To Ares' merry murdering, what time
He bans with forked scourge, with twofold
spear⁽⁶⁴²⁾

And death-steeds twain,—let him, I say, who
sweats

'Neath such a pack of trouble, chant at will
Eriny's pæan.⁽⁶⁴⁵⁾ But for me, whose voice

Of cheer and gladness bids the city bask
In Heaven's smile, 'tis hard to mingle good
With ill concernment. All the wrack was
big
With wrath upon the Achaeans ; fire and sea
Forgot their ancient feud and plighted faith ⁽⁶⁵⁰⁾
In warranty of ruin to the host
Of Argos. In the deadly dark there waked
A fell tempestuous flood, and Thracian blasts
Dashed ship on ship like angry rams amuck
Mid the wild ravening of the sleety storm,
Till, scattered by that wolfish hind, they fled
Into the murk afar. When daylight shone,
We saw the glimmering Aegean flecked
With waifs of wreckage and Achaean dead.
Howbeit some pilot more than man, whose hand
In mercy took the helm, by fetch of wit
Or intercession kept our hull unscathed,
And Fortune, wafting safety, dropped aboard ⁽⁶⁶⁴⁾
And rode it out with us ; our ship nor dragged
Amid the breaking surge nor drave aground
Upon the rocky coast. Then half assured,
Half fearful of that briny grave, we watched
And brooded sadly in the amber morn
On our good fleet so bruised and buffeted.
And now (O cruel hap !) whoe'er survive
Report us for dead men, and they withal
In our surmise are e'en as ill bestead.
Howbeit may the best betide ; but first
And chiefly, deem not Menelaus baulked.
If anywhere the sunbeams wot of him
Among the quick, Zeus will be pitiful
And fend untimely ruin from his race ;

Fear not, some sleight divine will bring him
home.

So ends my story, and 'tis naught but truth.

[*Exit.*

Chorus.

Surely 'twas a soothsay of fate, by whatsoever
wisardry of demon tongues she was luckily clept
Helena,⁽⁶⁸⁶⁾—that froward queen of strife and bride of
the spear. A snare hight she, and a snare she set for
ships and warriors and warraid burgh, whenas from
forth her dainty curtains she sailed with the soughing
of giant⁽⁶⁹²⁾ Zephyrus; and scarce had her henchmen
made the bosky strand of Simoeis, when a hunt of
war-dogs embattled, targe on targe, were scenting
bloody havoc on the oars' blank trail. Then was
Ilion betrothed indeed to a namesake of trouble,⁽⁶⁹⁹⁾
with whose wedding a writ of wrath went out to be
done betimes upon her groomsmen for dishonouring of
the homely board and Zeus the hearthmate. A full-
flushed strain of Hymen was all their song at the
first, but now 'tis a pitiful elegy that Priamos' aged city
hath learned: "Woe worth the couch of Paris, woe
for a hundred moons of dirge and the bloodshed of my
wretched folk!"

Even so hath a man reared in his home a lion's⁽⁷¹⁷⁾
weanling imp unsuckled, and he is tame in the first-
lings⁽⁷²⁰⁾ of his life, a fondling and playmate of children
and elders, dandled oftentimes in their arms and fawning
blithely on their hands when his belly pincheth. But
in his heyday he discovereth the wildness of his sires;
he maketh a feast unbidden to repay their nursery and
glutteth him with a butchery of sheep, so that the
servants ære beaten and browsick before that godly

priest⁽⁷³⁵⁾ of murder in the shambles, wherein he was bred and housed for the ministry of Até.

Oh, 'twas a halcyon hour of lovethoughts that passed o'er Ilion's sleeping town, with her soft bravery and delicate glances and her maying in Eros' garden ! But a strange misfare and a rueful end she made of her bridal ; for the shadow of Erinys⁽⁷⁴⁸⁾ amated her in doleful drear, and Zeus bade their wives to a tryst of weeping at her bed.

'Tis a stale parable which was uttered unto men of yore, that a wordling's prosperity dieth not childless, but hath issue of its lustihood,⁽⁷⁵⁴⁾ and good fortune must needs choke his race with aftermath of bale. I dare gainsay the general tongue : 'tis the úngodly deed which doth beget and multiply its sinful kind, but a fair heritage never faileth the upright house.

Violence is wont to bring forth a child of her eld, that waxeth in turn to her mischievous prime, soon or late, in a man's evil day ; and she begetteth insolence and boldness, an unclean spirit terrible and mighty, twin deadly shapes with their parents' visage darkening his halls.

But Justice lighteneth the sootied hovel, and crowneth the modest life ; with disdainful eyes she goeth past the golden pile that is emblazed by filthy hands, and seeketh the pure abode. She boweth not her head to the drossy⁽⁷⁸⁰⁾ show of riches and the pomp of pride misproud, but guideth all to the goal.

[*Enter AGAMEMNON and CASSANDRA.*]

Seed of Atreus ! scourge of Troia !

Oh, what stately

Speech befits my liege ? What homage

Nice, nor turning short nor duty's
 Mark o'ershooting?
 Whatso is unreal taketh
 Many a mortal wit perverse.
 Each, if fortune frown, is ready
 With a sigh of courtly sorrow,
 Though his heart be all unwrung;
 If she smile anon, a minion
 Leer will mask the scowl of envy.
 But the shepherd well discerning
 Looketh in the eyes of treason,
 That would flatter him with wat'ry
 Film of feignèd loyalty.
 Sire, when thou wast set on warring
 All for Helen, I avow it,
 Right unhandsomely I limned thee
 For a fool whose judgment foundered,
 Heart'ning men to death with bloody
 Victim's warrant.⁽⁸⁰³⁾

Now not lightly nor with malice
 Welcome we the work well done.
 Thou shalt learn betimes and reckon
 How thy burghers kept the city,
 One aright and one amiss.

Agam. Due greeting first to Argos and her gods,
 My partners, who have furthered our return
 And that condign requital I have taken
 On Priam's town. His cause was heard in
 Heaven

All under seal;⁽⁸¹³⁾ the bloody urn fulfilled
 With votes of death to Ilion; for her
 No hand but Fancy's fumbled in the void.⁽⁸¹⁷⁾
 Hell's altars are alive and red with fumes

Of wealth yet smouldering on her ashy grave.
'Tis meet we pay for the gods' large desert
Our grateful recompense. Full close the toils
Of our o'ertopping vengeance compassed them,
When Argos' giant broodmare,⁽⁸²⁴⁾ big with
shields,

All for a woman, champ'd the town in dust,
Vaulting her lion ramp clean o'er their towers
What time the Pleiads set,⁽⁸²⁶⁾ and lapped her fill
Of royal blood.⁽⁸²⁸⁾ I tender to the gods
This ample homage first. Thy loyal thought
Hath caught mine ear withal. E'en as thou
sayest

I say, and advocate thy lawful plaint.
In sooth, the generous quality is rare,
Which owns a friend's success ungrudgingly.
Nay, each distempered churl, whose heart is
galled

By envy's venom'd fang, is e'en annoyed
With twofold discontent ; he frets and groans
For his own woe and for his neighbour's
weal.⁽⁸³⁷⁾

Full well I know and tell ye, loving friends
Professed were friendship's glassy counterfeit,
A shadow's spectre ; our malingerer⁽⁸⁴¹⁾
Odysseus—be he living, while I speak,
Or dead—of all my yokemates only he
Pulled like a mettled tracehorse.⁽⁸⁴²⁾ For the
rest,

In high assembly⁽⁸⁴⁵⁾ with all circumstance
We must debate anon of commonwealth
And heavenly concerns. Whate'er is well,
We will confirm and stablsh. Where is need

Of leechcraft politic, we will essay
 With charitable knife or cautery ⁽⁸⁴⁹⁾
 To stint the plague-sore. First within yon halls
 In my hearth-chamber I will greet the gods,
 Who sped and brought me back. May victory
 Follow me and bide stedfast to the end ! ⁽⁸⁵⁵⁾

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.

Clyt. Elders of Argos' city, I take no shame
 To tell you all my wanton heart's desire
 For this my husband. Our timidity
 E'en wanes with length of time. I read ye, sirs,
 No rote but mine own miserable life
 Through his long tarriance at Ilion.
 First, 'twas a heinous hardship for a wife
 To keep her chair ⁽⁸⁶²⁾ forlorn without her mate,
 Beset with shocking rumours, now '*He comes !*'
 Anon, '*He brings thee*' (so they whispered me)
 '*Worse hurt, that shall be foisted on thy house.*' ⁽⁸⁶⁵⁾
 And for his wounds—in sooth, if they had rained
 As fast as idle tales were sluiced on us,
 No hunting-net, I say, hath eyelets more
 Than his scarred limbs ; and had his death
 befallen
 Whene'er they noised it, he would boast, me-
 thinks,
 Three bodies and three graves, a Geryon,
 The second of his line, enveloping
 His triple form with triple coverlet ⁽⁸⁷²⁾
 Of earth above him and all earth below.
 Full many a deadly noose from o'er my neck
 They brake despite my strong despair, that waxed
 With every fretting hearsay. For this cause

Our son, the keeper of thy plighted vows
 And mine, Orestes, stands not, as were meet,
 Beside thee. Marvel not ; kind Strophius,
 Our Phocian ally,⁽⁸⁸¹⁾ tends him. 'Twas his
 rede,

Reckoning the double risk, thy life at stake
 There before Troy, the loud-tongued lawless
 mob

In wait to fling thy council ⁽⁸⁸⁴⁾ down ; for men
 Are fain to lift their heels against the fallen.

Or marvel, but acquit my plea of guile.

For me in truth the gushing fount of tears

Is drained to the last drop, my aching eyes

So long have watched and wept for thee, so long

My lights ⁽⁸⁹⁰⁾ have flamed unheeded. From
 my dreams

I wakened evermore at the light hum

Of the buzzing gnat ; for thou wast after hurt,

Meseemed, than tallied with my times of sleep.

So much have I endured ; and now my heart

Makes truce with grief and cries aloud, " Behold

A watch-dog of the fold, a strong forestay ⁽⁸⁹⁷⁾

To keep the ship, a stately column set

Beneath the soaring roof ; dear to thine own

As to a sire his only child, or land

Sighted by mariners in sheer distress,

Fair as the daylight when the storm is spent,

Sweet as the flowing fountain to the lips

Of traveller athirst ! " Oh rare delight

To scape the incubus of woful need !

May Heaven grudge me not the courtesies

Of this proud greeting ; 'tis the utterance

Of long-pent sorrow. Now, sweet heart, descend

From this mule-wain, but set not on the earth
 Thy foot that trod on Ilion, O my liege.
 Hasten, my handmaids,⁽⁹⁰⁸⁾ as I gave you charge,
 Strew ye his pathway with your tapestries.
 Yea, pave his road with purple ; for behold !
 'Tis Justice goes before him to a house⁽⁹¹¹⁾
 Unlooked for ; and the rest my thoughtfulness
 That slumbers not, if the gods suffer me,
 Shall order justly to the final act.

Agam. Daughter of Leda,⁽⁹¹⁴⁾ guardian of my halls,
 Full lengthy is thy parley ; 'tis a match
 E'en for my long campaigning. But a meed
 Of praise from others were a better guerdon.
 Away ! No womanish pampering for me !
 Grovel not there, like some barbarian thrall,
 In gaping adoration,⁽⁹²⁰⁾ nor beshrew
 My footpath with your livery. This pomp
 Is but a delicate allure purloined,
 To snare my feet, from Heaven's inventory.
 Honour me as a man, thy lord, not god.
 Without your carpets and your broideries
 My fame cries loud enough. A prudent heart
 Is God's peculiar boon. Call no man blest
 Till death hath sealed his life's prosperity.⁽⁹²⁹⁾
 Be such mine armoury, and I go safe.

Clyt. Answer and speak me thy whole honest mind.

Agam. Honest it is, and whole it shall remain.

Clyt. Is it some timid vow that bates thy pride ?⁽⁹³³⁾

Agam. I am no fool and speak my flat resolve.

Clyt. Had Priam won, what state would he have kept ?

Agam. His floor had been well damasked, like enough.

Clyt. Then fear not thou mankind's censorious tongue.

Agam. Nathless, the people's voice is very strong.

Clyt. But he whom no man envies hath no praise.

Agam. A woman may not hanker after war.

Clyt. Defeat sits comely on the fortunate.

Agam. Dost prize the victory in such cheap strife ?

Clyt. Be gracious ; grudge me not the mastery.

Agam. If thou wilt have it so, unloose me quick
 These sandals that do service to my feet ;
 And while I tread your purples of the sea,⁽⁹⁴⁶⁾
 I pray no envy light from eyes divine
 Afar. Sore shame it is to waste and mar
 With fleshly soilure⁽⁹⁴⁸⁾ this dear-purchased
 wealth

Of brodered tissue. But no more ! I charge
 thee,

Give courteous welcome to this stranger maid.
 God's face inclines to him, whose hand is light
 In victory : the yoke of bondage galls
 No patient necks. She followed in my train,
 A flower from our ample spoil select,⁽⁹⁵⁴⁾
 My soldiers' bounty. Now, since thou hast done
 Thine empery upon me, I will foot
 Your avenue of purple to my halls.

Clyt. Behold, the sea is there, and who shall drain
 Her mantling crimson froth, wherein we dip
 Our raiment newly as in precious pelf.⁽⁹⁶⁰⁾
 Thy chamber, Sire, hath store of it by grace
 Of Heaven ; our house is all unused to want.
 Nay, I had vowed a pile of frippery
 Beneath thy feet, if seers had published us
 Such soothsay, when I vexed my wit to buy
 Thy life's recovery. While its root doth live,
 Yon foliage spreads an awning o'er our roof
 Against the ravening dog-star. Yea, thou comest

To this dear homely hearth as harbinger
 In winter of returning warmth ; anon,
 When the sweet breath of Heaven in the grape
 Is mellowing the vintage, all thy house
 Is filled with thy fair presence as a breeze
 Of springtide, welcoming its crownèd lord.
 Zeus, Zeus, who crownest all things, ⁽⁹⁷²⁾ Lord of
 lords,
 According to thy purpose crown my prayer !

[*Exeunt.*

Chorus.

What haggard terror doth beat with heavy wings at
 the door of my bodeful heart, and maketh a drone of
 prophecy unbidden, unbought ? My wit is cheerless
 and amort ; my courage faileth me to spew out ⁽⁹⁸⁰⁾ this
 thing as it were some dark dream. Time hath worn
 sere, since our cabled barques were fast belaid on the
 strand, when the host had taken ship for Ilion. Mine
 eyes' very witness certifieth their returning, yet my
 soul hath lost the wont of hope, and inly pipeth me a
 strain of the tomb with no lute ⁽⁹⁹⁰⁾ nor leadman save
 Erinys. 'Tis no fancy of my heart's travail that
 setteth all my bosom aswirl in earnest with effectual
 throbs. ⁽⁹⁹²⁾ Howbeit I pray this cloud be as dust, that
 the hour shall lay and scatter.

When mortal weal hath waxed large and over-
 cloyed, 'tis pushed hard by sickness its neighbour,
 for no balk is betwixt. Even below the fair tide
 of prosperity misfortune lurketh as a reef ; yet, if
 husbandly caution make a convenient jettison, the
 house foundereth not quite, though it ride hawse-full
 in calamity. Zeus droppeth fatness and seasonable
 plenty in the furrows, and lo ! famine perisheth from

the earth. But what spell⁽¹⁰²¹⁾ shall call back the red blood, which is once spilt at the slayer's feet? Else had not Zeus warily smitten him,⁽¹⁰²⁴⁾ whose wisardry raised men from the dead. But that Heaven hath appointed stations,⁽¹⁰²⁶⁾ whereof the one letteth the other from presumption, my heart would outrun my tongue and outpour all its burden. But now my soul crieth moodily in the dark, thinking never to unravel the skein of my feverish surmise.

Re-enter CLYTEMNESTRA.

Clyt. Hearken to me, Cassandra, get thee in,
Since of his mercy Zeus hath housed thee here,
Appointing thee to take thy place and part
With washen hands 'fore him, our lord of wealth,
Among my goodly train of servitors.
Leave the mule-wain, I bid thee. Nay, no airs!
Alcmena's doughty son, e'en he, they tell,
Was sold and brooked to eat the bondsman's
bread.⁽¹⁰⁴¹⁾

'Tis a rare boon withal, if one demeaned
By fortune's adverse poise be thrall'd to pride
Of lordly heritage; your upstart wights,
Laden by hazard with their golden sheaves,
Are gripers strict and merciless outright.⁽¹⁰⁴⁵⁾
From us thou hast thy customary due.

Chor. Hark, she hath spoken plainly in thine ear,
And since the toils of fate are fast on thee,
Obedience were a better shift than none.

Clyt. I would fain reason with her, if my words
Pass to her wit, so she be not uncouth
Of tongue and talk in marten twittering.⁽¹⁰⁵⁰⁾

Chor. Do as she counsels thee, lest worse befall ;
Rise from thy chariot seat and follow her.

Clyt. Nay, I'll not dally with her at the gate.
There, by our midmost hearth ⁽¹⁰⁵⁶⁾ aflame within
The sheep are standing, and our fire awaits
Guerdon of bloodshed for this boon unhop'd.
If thou wilt do thy part, make no delay.
Lift thy barbaric hand, if all my speech
Is strange to thee, and give us silent signs.

Chor. Sooth, she is strange ; her signs are hard to read.
She frets like some wild creature in the net.

Clyt. Oh, she is mad, or some distempered mood
Is on her. She, a prisoner freshly torn
From ruined Troy, must champ away her rage
In blood or e'er she learns to bear the curb !
She flouts me ; I will waste my words no more.

[*Exit* CLYTEMNESTRA.]

Chor. She is too pitiful for anger. Come,
Poor maiden, prithee quit thy chariot.
Handsel betimes the yoke thou canst not scape.

Cass. Woe ! Woe ! Avaunt ! Apollo ! O Apollo !

Chor. Art crying woe on Loxias ? No ear
Hath our wise lord for doleful minstrelsy. ⁽¹⁰⁷⁵⁾

Cass. Woe ! Woe ! Avaunt ! Apollo ! O Apollo !

Chor. Again her boding wail affronts yon god,
Our holy one, whom deathful sounds annoy.

Cass. Apollo ! Apollo ! Thou god of ways ! An
Apollyon ¹⁰⁸¹ art thou, who hast undone me twice
and utterly.

Chor. Ah, 'tis some telltale soothsay of herself.
Poor heart, so big with fate beneath the yoke !

Cass. Apollo ! Apollo ! Thou god of ways ! O

my undoer, what way hast thou led me? What house is this?

Chor. 'Tis Atreus' palace. If thou knowest not,
I tell thee sooth, nor shalt thou gainsay me.

Cass. Nay, 'tis an ungodly house; how many and near in blood have bled and hung here! The floor is wet as 'twere a butchery.

Chor. Aha! this scentful sleuth-hound at our door
Goes questing on some trail of manslaughter.

Cass. Yonder is my witness and avouch, yon slaughtered babes making moan for a father, who devoured their sodden flesh.

Chor. O famous oracle! Howbeit we ask
No stale interpreting of things foregone.

Cass. O God, what strange thing doth she devise?
What strange device and hurtful to wound her kindred unto death? And help is none in the house, far or near.

Chor. I am at fault, now she divines no more
Of what I knew and all the city bruits.

Cass. Ah wretch, wilt thou do it? The lord of thy bed and fresh from thy bath of cleansing! How shall I tell thy doing? 'Twill out anon! She is spreading something to the stretch of her arms.⁽¹¹¹¹⁾

Chor. My understanding goes astray again
Betwixt her riddles and blear prophecies.

Cass. Ah! out upon it! What is that hellish net I espy? 'Tis his wife, who maketh him a deathbed of her bloody toils. Shout, ye sprites of ravin, for a stoning⁽¹¹¹⁷⁾ at your altar in this house.

Chor. What yelling fiend of wrath dost wake, to ban
Our house? My spirit blanches at thy speech.
Yea, the blood courseth to my heart ⁽¹¹²¹⁾ pale as when
it ebbs away and fleets with the waning of life's ray;
for perdition cometh apace.

Cass. Oh, ware! ware! Keep the bull from the
heifer! With her crafty felon horn she hath him in
the drapery. ⁽¹¹²⁷⁾ Hah! a blow, a body flashing the
water! I tell you, there is bloody treason doing in
the bath.

Chor. Albeit I am no nice judge professed
Of prophecies, I argue ill of this.
But what comfortable tidings fare to men's ears from
your oracling? A drone of terror is all the burden
of these wordy canticles. ⁽¹¹³⁵⁾

Cass. Ah me, how hath fate o'ertaken and foredone
me! In this cup of sorrow my own plaint is poured.

Ah woe is me! Why hast thou brought me
hither,

To bear thee company, forsooth, in death?

Chor. 'Tis some witching strain that hags thy sense.
Thou makest thine elegy like the russet nightingale
with her weary heartsick moaning for Itys, for
Itys ⁽¹¹⁴⁴⁾ and the trouble that burgeoned on her life.

Cass. Ah, she doth but warble of her dead self.
For her 'twas a sweet tearless passing unto that
wingèd shape, wherewith the gods clothed her. But
for me awaits a forkèd blade to cleave my flesh in
twain. ⁽¹¹⁴⁹⁾

Chor. Whence hast thou these wanton throes of
prophecy troubling thy tongue, that thou singest us

this jangled chime of thy dismal, doting quavers?
What strange sacring was thine, thou ribald oracle?

Cass. Alas for Paris and the house that rueth his wedding. Alas, Scamander, my fatherly stream! I was thy nursling once and a child on thy banks. But soon, methinks, mine oracles shall return to Cocytos and the banks of Acheron.⁽¹¹⁶⁰⁾

Chor. What is this boding thou speakest in a strain too clear? Any mortal babe might read it. My heart doth inly ache and bleed for my distressful plight, and mine ears are filled with the wonder of thy sorrowful wailing.

Cass. Alas for my city's sore tribulation and her undoing. Nothing worth was the multitude of my father's cattle offered from his meads, whose blood was poured out before her towers. For they are fallen and fallen is she without avail, and I must quickly lay my tingling ear⁽¹¹⁷²⁾ to earth.

Chor. Again thine importunate boding strain; nay, some fiendful power hath fallen upon thee, and shrewdly set thy tongue to this hideous rhyme of death, whereof I know not the import nor the end.

Cass. Lo now, no longer shall mine oracle
Peep from its veil, like a new-spoused maid.⁽¹¹⁷⁹⁾
Methinks 'twill rush upon you as the wind
Freshening at daybreak, and a huger wave
Of woe shall greet it, looming in the light.⁽¹¹⁸²⁾
Hear ye my rede no more in riddling wise,
And bear me patient witness, while I scent
The trail of ancient misdeeds, step by step.
There houses here a choir, which never quits
Your habitation, and their voices chime⁽¹¹⁸⁷⁾
In cursing, not in blessing. 'Tis the rout

Of sister Furies, who will not depart,
For they are drunk with mortal blood, and
bold,⁽¹¹⁹⁰⁾

And fastened on the house, with one refrain
They sing its first damnation and anon
Tell of a loathly bed profaned⁽¹¹⁹³⁾ and rife
With hate unbrotherly. Say, have I missed
Or watch my vantage of the bow? Am I
A vagrant babbler, prophesying lies?
Attest and straitly swear it, that I know⁽¹¹⁹⁷⁾
The sins which time hath storied on these walls.

Chor. Go to! No salve is in an oath, but pain,
Its very element. I marvel thou,
Bred far beyond the sea, dost featly tell
Of our strange-spoken city, as 'twere thine.

Cass. My sacring was of him, your holy one.

Chor. Was he enamoured of thy maidenhood?

Cass. I was ashamed erewhile to speak of him.

Chor. Yes, all are daintier in prosperity.

Cass. His wooing was the very breath of love.

Chor. And came ye to your bedrite, as was due?

Cass. I plighted him my faith and kept it not.

Chor. Wast thou e'en then full-fraught with prophecy?

Cass. Yea, all the city's woe was on my lips.

Chor. What fell redress had Loxias of thee?

Cass. No man believed me more, when I had sinned.

Chor. Thy wisdom hath its warranty from us.

Cass. O misery!

Again a horrid whisper at my heart;
It throbs and reels with boding vision stark.
Behold ye by the threshold bodies frail
As phantoms of a dream. See, they are boys,
Dead peradventure by a kinsman's hand,

Who took their baby lives ; their hands are
charged

With flesh and entrails, rueful cheer that passed
Their father's lips. See ! Flesh of his own
flesh !

For this I tell you, there is one who plots ⁽¹²²³⁾

Vengeance : a dastard lion keeps the lair

And couches in the master's place, ah me !

My master, for his yoke is on my neck.

He knows not,—he, your admiral, whose hand

Spoiled Ilion—what sinister success

Shall wait upon the fulsome minioning

Of that vile lecher's tongue, where mischief
lurks

And hatches. Out upon her daring ! She

To slay a man ! What name of beast obscene

Befits her ? Cockatrice ? ⁽¹²³³⁾ Or is she cleft

A Scylla killing sailors on her rocks ?

A rampant priest ⁽¹²³⁵⁾ of Hell, who breathes
a ban

Of mortal hate against her kin ? For hark !

She yells her jubilant defiance, bold

As one who routs a broken foe, and laughs

A feigned welcome loud. Ah sirs, what boots

Your misbelief ? Ye shall not gainsay fate

Nor me in the hour that cometh, but for ruth

Aver my prophecy was all too true.

Chor. I know the horror of Thyestes' feast,

Who ate his children's flesh. 'Tis ghastly truth,

No pale presentment, that offends mine ear.

But for the rest my wit runs all astray.

Cass. Thine eyes shall witness Agamemnon dead.

Chor. Peace, wretch ! Enough of thy disastrous prate !

Cass. 'Tis spoken ! Paeon ⁽¹²⁴⁸⁾ may not salve my word.

Chor. Not if this thing shall be, which Heaven forbend !

Cass. Murder is busy ; 'twill belate thy prayer.

Chor. What man is he, who brings this woe to pass ?

Cass. How hath mine oracle escaped thy ken !

Chor. Nay, I discern not who nor what's at work.

Cass. Yet your Greek speech is pat upon my tongue.

Chor. Yea, Pytho's riddling parle is Greek withal.

Cass. O God ! The fire again ! The burning fire !

Alas, alas for me, O Lord of light ! ⁽¹²⁵⁷⁾

Yon woman-lion couching with a wolf,

That knavish wolf within the kingly lair,

Will raven me, ah pity ! For my wrong

He is rewarded ; to the sword she whets ⁽¹²⁶²⁾

His life is forfeit. But she vows, methinks,

Her poisoned cup of malice holds enough

To guerdon me besides. Why do I keep

This mockery of myself, this mantic wand,

These chaplets on my neck ? ⁽¹²⁶⁵⁾ I will destroy

Thee ⁽¹²⁶⁶⁾ ere I die : lie there and rot, with me,

Or deck some other with your deadly pride.

But see, Apollo's hands are stripping me

Of my prophetic robe. ⁽¹²⁷⁰⁾ Aye, he endured

To see me walk, 'mid wanton scorn and loud

Of maskèd enemies, in this array ;

Endured to hear them call me vagabond

And fortune-teller, beggar, starveling wretch.

All this I bore and now the seer divine,

Who made me and unmade me, drags his seer

To die upon no altar of my home.

There, on her reeking block, ⁽¹²⁷⁷⁾ I am to bleed

Like any slaughtered victim. But the gods

Will leave us not dishonoured in our graves.
 One day our champion shall arise, a child
 Born to avenge his sire and take her life,
 Who gave him birth. An exile from this land
 And outcast, he shall yet return, to crown
 His kindred's ruin. For a mighty oath
 Is sworn in Heaven, that the couchèd dead
 Shall call and bring him to his own. And I,
 Why should I dwell a mourner in their gates,
 Since I have seen mine Ilion fordone,
 And Heaven's verdict hath gone forth 'gainst you,
 Conquerors of my city? I will pass
 My patient way to death. But to this door
 I speak and pray, e'en as 'twere Hades' gate,
 The blow be timely: may I close mine eyes
 Unpained and softly pour my life away.

Chor. Enough, poor maid, so wise, so woe-begone!
 If thou bespeakest death e'en to his face,
 How farest thou so staunchly like an ox,
 Whose feet the god compels to sacrifice? ⁽¹²⁹⁸⁾

Cass. Sirs, 'tis too late; escape is none for me.

Chor. Howbeit the latest hath the gain in time.

Cass. My day is come; small profit is in flight.

Chor. Yea, staunch indeed and patient is thy heart.

Cass. Ah me, that sorry laud befits my plight.

Chor. Yet, honour is death's comely recompense.

Cass. Woe for thee, sire! woe for thy nobly-born!

Chor. What fright is on thee? Why recoilest thou?

Cass. Pah!

Chor. Gramercy, what hath turned thy fancy sick?

Cass. There is a fume of bloodshed in the house.

Chor. Nay, 'tis the savour of hearth-sacrifice.

Cass. A ghastly vapour rank as from the tomb.

Chor. In sooth, thy lips drop Syrian perfume here !

Cass. Enough ! In yon death-chamber I will wail
Myself and Agamemnon. Farewell, life !
Ah, think not, sirs, I quake and quaver here
As a bird starting at an empty bush ;
But when another woman dies for me,
And for a man ill-wed a man hath fallen,
Bear me your witness in my grave ; I claim
This service of your friendship ere I die.

Chor. Oh pitiful ! Must thou foretell thy death ?

Cass. I would fain speak once more, yea, cry my dirge
To yonder sun, whose light hath passed for me,
And pray of him that my red-handed foes,
E'en for their easy slaughter of a slave
May guerdon mine avenger ⁽¹³²⁴⁾ with their blood.
Alas for man's estate, a limnèd sketch,
That fades with fortune's smile and with her
frown
Is blotted out for ever ! So to live
And so to end is pity, first and last.

[*Exit.*

Chorus.

Worldly weal sufficeth never
Men's desire : ⁽¹³³²⁾ albeit envy
Points her finger, none forbiddeth,
Crying "Enter not my halls."
What if he, from Priam's fallen
Town returning
Home, a hero graced of Heaven,
Dying to the dead shall render
Blood for blood and death for death,
Who that heareth will avow him
Born to live and die unscathed ?

Agamemnon (within)—

Help, help without ! Oh, I am hurt to death.

Chor. Silence, who is stricken ? 'Twas a cry of mortal agony.

Agam. Oh, I am hurt again, hurt unto death.

Chor. 'Twas the King who groaned : methinks the bloody deed is even done.

Nay, but give we one another counsel in our parlous case.⁽¹³⁴⁷⁾

Chor. 1. Sirs, I advise ye for my part to call
A timely rescue hither from the town.

Chor. 2. Not so ! In, in, I say, and with all speed
Unmask this murder ere the sword be dry !

Chor. 3. I am thy seconder and cast my vote
For doing ; 'tis no time for shy delay.

Chor. 4. 'Tis treason's blazon threatening the burgh ;
Ware, sirs ! The note of tyranny is struck.

Chor. 5. We dally ; their hands slumber not, who spurn
The fair conceit of caution in the dust.

Chor. 6. No happy cue of counsel prompts my tongue.
'Tis for the doer to deliberate.

Chor. 7. My judgment too is mute ; no wisardry
Of speech is mine to raise the dead to life.

Chor. 8. What, sirs, shall we live on to follow meek
Behind these lewd defilers of the house ?

Chor. 9. Better to perish than endure the shame.
Death is more merciful than tyranny.

Chor. 10. Shall we indeed divine our lord's fate
Upon this doleful witness of our ears ?

Chor. 11. We talk in heat and ignorance withal ;
There is a gulf 'twixt knowledge and surmise.

Chor. 12. Sirs, 'tis resolved by plenary consent
We learn what hath befallen Atreus' son.

[CLYTEMNESTRA is discovered.]

Clyt. Now ⁽¹³⁷²⁾ will I make no scruple to unsay
The wordy lure, which I contrived for him.
How else had I encompassed him, my foe,
The feigned friend who was my foe, to raise
Sheer toils of death he might not overleap?
Full many a year I bore upon my heart
The gage he threw me long ago. And now
'Tis done! Here stand I, where I struck him
down.

I will not flinch from telling, how I wrought
The doom he could not parry nor resist.
First I impaled him with an endless coil,
As 'twere a fishing-net, a deadly wealth
Of raiment. Twice I smote him; twice he
shrieked,

And sank upon the spot. Then, as he lay,
With a third blow I dedicated him
To Death, to keep him safe among the dead.
So brake his fretting heart; but, gasping still,
He dashed a sudden spray of blood upon me;
And I rejoiced in that dark gory dew,
As the green corn rejoices, when it swells
And burgeons in the welkin's wet embrace.
Elders of Argos! How it is, ye know;
I give you joy, and if no joy is yours,
The vaunt is mine. Oh, were it meet to pour
A brave libation on the corse, 'twere justly,
Aye more than justly done. For he has filled
His bowl brimful of curses and of crimes,
And now returns to drain it in his house!

Chor. O shameless tongue! To flout thy fallen
lord!

I marvel at thy loud effrontery.

Clyt. I am no shallow woman, whom ye mock.
With unconfounded heart, albeit ye know,
I speak; and whether thou wilt praise or blame,
'Tis one to me. Lo, my right arm hath wrought
The handiwork of justice : he is dead,
My husband, Agamemnon. He is dead !

Chor. Woman, what poison from earth's veins hast
thou eaten or bane of the sea-brine hast drunk,⁽¹⁴⁰⁸⁾
that thou layest the people's curse as incense of wrath
on thy head ? For thy hewing and thy hacking a hue
of the burghers' hate will cast thee out.⁽¹⁴¹¹⁾

Clyt. Now dealest thou to me an outlaw's doom,
The city's hate, the people's ban ; but then
Thou hadst no plea to stop his felon hand,
Who slew his child, sweet offspring of my pain,
To charm the Thracian gusts, and recked her
death
As she had been a sheep, although his fields
Teemed with their fleecy multitude. This man
Behoved it not to harry from the land
Attaint of murder foul ? Stern is thine ear
And strict thine inquisition for my act.
Rail on me as thou wilt ; 'tis a fair match.
If thy hand be the stronger, I am set
To thy command. If Heaven rules otherwise,
I'll school thee to humility betimes.

Chor. Thou art termagant and presumptuous of
tongue, forasmuch as the bloody haviour of thy wit
runneth to madness, and thine eyes are red, e'en as
if his wounds did bleed upon thy brow. But blow
for blow thou must render hereafter, disgraced and
disowned.

Clyt. Hark ye, I have an oath in Heaven, sealed
'Fore Atè and Erinys in his blood,
And witnessed by my daughter for his deed
Of doom : no fear shall enter where my hope
Is chambered, while Aegisthus keeps my hearth
Aglow with loyal kindness as of yore.
A buckler strong is he, to make me bold.
There lies the spouse who wronged me, pam-
pered pet
Of his Chryseises at Troy ; and she,
His slave, his soothsayer, his oracle,
His darling mate, who shared his bed and bench
Upon the decks, hath paid me scot with him.
Lo, he hath his discharge ; she, like the swan,
Hath wailed her song of death and slumbers
couched
Beside her fondling swain, to tender me
More sweets and daintier for my honeymoon.

Chor. Oh that from yon bourn of sleep eternal might
befall some death, not painful nor bedrid ; for that he,
our kindly guardian, is stricken. Sore trouble had he
for a wife's sake, and from a wife he hath the sword's
divorce.

Ah the tale of blood unreckoned,
Ah the lives that Troy hath squandered,
Witness Helena, for thee !

Behold thy trophy of blood ; from my lord's cruel
hurt thou hast plucked this last blazon, for a quarry
of quarrels in the house.⁽¹⁴⁶¹⁾

Clyt. Stay thy fretful tongue ; invoke not
Death upon thee.
Cease thy rant of war and murder,

Tell me not the Danaan death-roll,
Nor recount the woe unscaled
Wrought by Helen's naughtiness.

Chor. Thou fiendful incubus, who hauntest our dwelling and either line of Tantalus, and gallest my heart with empery of viragoes twain ! Lo, she ⁽¹⁴⁷³⁾ flourisheth her prize with a stately chant, like some curst raven perching on her carrion.

Clyt. Now thy voice with right intention
Calls to parley
Our familiar ⁽¹⁴⁷⁷⁾ gorged and glutted ;
Wombed of him, the wolf within us
Battens on our sores, that issue
Ever fresh in blood and bane.

Chor. Welaway ! Zeus, who is paramount in cause and act, doth permit him. For what purpose of man availeth without Zeus ? Hath not all this a warrant of God ? ⁽¹⁴⁸⁸⁾

Oh my king, my king, tearfalling
Pity loseth
Heart and voice, while thou in yonder
Spider's felon web art wasting
To thy foul, ungodly death.

Ah me for thy bed of villanage, smitten and cleft with the double murd'rous blade ⁽¹⁴⁹⁶⁾ in her despiteful hand.

Clyt. Ye aver, 'twas I who did it ;
Nay, account not
Me the spouse of Agamemnon.
'Tis the fiend of old, who grimly
Claimeth blood, a manly victim

For the children slain at Atreus'
Cruel banquet ;
That Alastor's wraith am I.

Chor. Who will bear thee witness that thou art innocent of this bloodshed ? Not so, albeit haply the ancient avenger doth abet thee ; seeing that red Ares shall ramp onward and sluice out the very heart of your race, till he hath purged yon chanel of baby gore.

Oh my king, my king, tearfalling
Pity loseth
Heart and voice, while thou in yonder
Spider's felon art wasting
To thy foul, ungodly death.

Ah me for thy bed of villanage, smitten and cleft with the double murd'rous blade in her spiteful hand.⁽¹⁵²⁰⁾

Clyt. Set not he a hand spiteful
'Gainst his household ?
For the child I bore, his scion,
For the bleeding of a mother's
Heart he bled ; his vaunt in Hades
Shall be humbled, now the deadly
Count is settled
By the tally of the sword.⁽¹⁵²⁹⁾

Chor. Every sleight of thought hath failed me. Oh, whither shall I turn in this ruining of the house ? I dread the wrack and the hurtling of a bloody sleet, that falleth no more in drops ; for Justice is whetting her sword anew upon the hone for another deed of bale.

Would, O Earth, thou hadst received me,
Ere mine eyes beheld him truckling
In yon silvered tumbrel-bath.⁽¹⁵⁴⁰⁾
Who will bury, who lament him ?

Darest thou, thy lord's assassin,
Mock him with thy moan and render
To the sullen shade a sorry
Quittance of thy hardiness ?

What earnest heart will be at pains to shower tears
or laud on the tomb of my liege divine ?

Clyt. Tell me of no mourner's mumming :
Down I smote him,
Down to earth, and down below it
I will house him unlamented
Save of one, his duteous daughter ;
She will meet him
With a kiss and hug of welcome
At yon passage
Of the rolling flood of sighs.⁽¹⁵⁵⁸⁾

Chor. Taunt answereth taunt ; but this knot of life
is too hard for me. The poller shall be polled, the
killer is forfeit : hath not Zeus written in the book of
days that the doer shall suffer ? ⁽¹⁵⁶²⁾ Oh that this seed
of wrath were cast forth of your house ! Perdition is
indeed set fast in your loins.

Clyt. Yea, thy saws are soothly spoken ;
With the demon
I would seal my bond and suffer
All this tyranny of troublous
Fortune, if but your familiar
Quit the Pleisthenids ⁽¹⁵⁶⁹⁾ and henceforth
Tear the bleeding heart of other
Kindred. Look ye, but a little
Share of wealth should quite suffice me,
Might I banish
Hate and murder from these halls.

Enter AEGISTHUS.

Aeg. Hail, merry morn, bright day of my redress !
This hour I will aver the gods on high
Keep ward for mortals and regard the griefs
Of earth, since I behold to my content
There, deftly shrouded in Eriny's' woof,
This vile defaulter, who hath paid me scot
For Atreus' handiwork. Mark well the gist.
He, this man's father, ruling o'er your land,
To bar the rival title,⁽¹⁵⁸⁵⁾ banned my sire
Thyestes, his own brother ; who, outcast
From home and city, yet returned again
A suppliant for mercy at the hearth.
The earnest of his miserable life
He gained, and died not there, nor bled, by
 grace
Of Atreus, on his father's homely floor.
But he, the miscreant sire of this dead man,
With kindness scant and full unkindly haste
Made him good cheer, professing that he kept
A feastful day,⁽¹⁵⁹²⁾ and to my father served
His very children's flesh upon the board.
High in his separate seat above, he broke
Piecemeal a mess of toes and finger-tips
Disguised ; my father straightway took and ate
Unwitting rank perdition to the race,
As thine eyes witness, with that food ; for lo !
Quick as the monstrous horror caught his sense,
He spewed the gory feast and spurned the board
And shrieked, implaining with its fatal crash
The house of Pelops and the damnèd seed
Of Pleisthenes. So was he doomed to fall ;

And mark, the right to weave this bloody skein
Was mine, since, to indemnify my sire
For sorrow past, he drave me out with him
And brethren twain, a babe in swaddling-clothes ;
And now I am a man, whom Justice reared
And hath restored. Albeit a stranger, I
Framed all the fiendish enginery ; mine
The hand that griped him. Wherefore death
were now

A guerdon fair for me, since I have seen
Him in the toils of Justice fast entrapp'd.

Chor. Aegisthus, I abhor the tongue that mocks
Affliction. 'Twas thy wilful doing killed
This man, thou say'st it ; thine was all the craft
That hatched this woful murder. Then beware!
Thy head shall not escape the righteous due
Of stoning and the people's malison.

Aeg. Big words ! But from our bench of mastery
We rule the ship, ye clamour from the thwarts
Beneath. Discretion is a parlous cue,
And irksome is her school for greybeard boys
As thou art. Bonds and bitter famishing
Lay e'en on aged wits a sovran spell
Of wisard leechcraft. Hast not eyes to see ?
Kick not to thy sore hurt against the goad.

Chor. False housewife, who defilest house and bed,
Thou, on the happy morrow of the war,
Thou to inveigle our captain to this death !

Aeg. Sweet words and rife for thee with bitterness.
Thou waggest not the like of Orpheus' tongue.
His pleasant music led a charmed world.
Thou, silly cur, whose yelping frets mine ears,
Shalt tamely cower in thy leadman's leash.

Chor. Thou'lt prince it here in Argos, fair my liege,
Whose cunning had no second in thy sword
To bring thy murderous device to act.

Aeg. I warrant ye a woman's deft intrigue
For that ; but I, his ancient enemy,
Was suspect. With his pelf I will assay
To rule the burghers, and my yoke shall lie
Full heavy on the rank and restive colt :
He may not prance in traces ; no, his mettle
Shall starve and moulder in the dungeon's
gloom.

Chor. Why then recoiled thy coward heart, that she
Must eke the valour which thou niggardest,
Thy ready warrioress, whose breath defiles
Our soil, our shrines. Mayhap Orestes lives :
Ah, may he yet return by Fortune's boon,
To set his bloody heel upon this pair !

Aeg. What ! art thou for deeds, not words ! Thy
lesson thou shalt learn anon.
Up, my trusty guardsmen, ready ! Now me-
thinks your work is near.

Chor. Up and ready, comrades : handle every man his
hilted sword.

Aeg. Hand on hilt, I will encounter ye, if need be,
to the death.

Chor. 'Death !' So be it as thou sayest ; lo, we
take the clue of chance.

Clyt. Nay, my well-beloved, let us cease from mis-
chiefing awhile.

For the crop of trouble we have harvested is
large enough.

Take we no more blood upon us ; further not
our count of loss.

Go thy way, and go, ye elders, to your houses.

While 'tis time,

Yield and parry fate ; 'twere better done to
leave the rest undone.

Lief and welcome were for us surcease of all
this misery,

Long as we have smarted, stricken by the cruel
spur of Fate.

I have spoken this my woman's counsel ; heed
it whoso list.

Aeg. Shall these flaunting tongues run rank and bur-
geon to my sufferance ?

Shall they riotously fling their ribald challenge
in our teeth ?

Rash and witless mutineers, who dare to flout
my mastery !

Chor. Craven wight, the men of Argos are not like to
cringe to thee.

Aeg. Ware, my hand shall overtake thee in the day
of thine account.

Chor. 'Twill o'erpass, if Heaven's favour hither guides
Orestes' feet.

Aeg. Well I mind me, men in exile cater for them-
selves with hope.

Chor. Fare thy best and batten on thy rape of justice,
while thou may'st.

Aeg. Be assured, for all this folly thou shalt make me
rich amends.

Chor. Bluster on and overcrow us, like a cock beside
his mate.⁽¹⁶⁷¹⁾

Clyt. Never heed, how loud soe'er and light their
barking ; I and thou

Will restore the comely order of the palace,
where we rule.

CHOEPHOROE

ORESTES.

Hermes, who o'er thy father's empery ⁽¹⁾
Keepest thy nether watch, be thou, I pray,
My saviour and my champion in this bourn
Of my long banishment. To thee, my sire,
I cry a summons from this charnel mount ⁽⁴⁾
To hearken and to answer. [Lo, I bring]
One lock, ⁽⁶⁾ my childhood's due to Inachus,
And one ⁽⁸⁾ to thee for tribute of my grief,
Since for thy murdered corpse I made no moan
Nor lifted hands ⁽⁹⁾ of mourning o'er thy bier.

What do mine eyes behold? A sombre show
Of women going forth in sable weeds!
What woful hap shall I surmise? Belike
Some new affliction hath cast down the house.
Or is it e'en to him, my sire, they bring
Drink-offerings to exorcise the grave? ⁽¹⁵⁾
'Tis shrewdly guessed; for yonder goes, methinks,
Electra, mine own sister, manifest
In doleful teen. Now grant me to avenge
My murdered father, Zeus! Up! of thy grace
Entreat with me. Soft, Pylades, aside!
Mark we the import of their litany.

“I made no moan,
Nor lifted hands of mourning o’er thy bier.”

Enter the CHORUS and ELECTRA.

Chorus.

On a wanton errand ⁽²²⁾ I fare from yon halls with pompous chalice and sharp twang of fists. A furlong of my nails' red prints hath fretted my face, ⁽²⁴⁾ even as my heart doth batten on livelong sighs. The lappet ⁽²⁹⁾ of my bosom is rent and shred distressfully ; the flaxen tissue of my vesture is done to sackcloth for my woful office.

Lo, there brake darkling on the privacy of my lady's chamber a nightshriek of terror, so that the hair of our flesh stood up ; for the spirit thereof was a soothsay ⁽³²⁾ of wrath in the ear of the house. And the oraclers divined of her dream ⁽³⁷⁾ and sealed us their rede, saying : " There is discontent in the grave and grievous malice against the slayer." Therefore hath yon woman set me on this ungodly errand of her charity ; she enforceth me, O mother Earth, to fend this bane from her. But my lips are loath to utter the word : ⁽⁴⁷⁾ for what shall redeem the blood, which she hath spilt on the ground ? Alas, my master's desolate hearth ! Alas for our house that is sunk to the dust ! A sullen murk of hatred hath gathered about it, since murder entered therein. The strong fence of majesty hath failed, which erst was impregnable and effectual in the ear of your people. They are fraught with fear ; prosperity is your worldling's god and more than god. Howbeit the eye of Justice striketh quick upon one in the daylight, another is reprieved from her pains until the gloaming, and of some she is even balked in the void of night. ⁽⁶⁵⁾ The blood which Earth's pregnant lap hath sucked doth set unto vengeance ⁽⁶⁷⁾ and findeth

no pore. The scourge of Perdition tarrieth for the bloodguilty, till he goeth down with the sores of his leprosy upon him. Repair is none, if a man pollute the nuptial bower;⁽⁷¹⁾ neither shall the confluence of all waters avail to wash away the defilement of bloodied hands.

Yet, since duress divine hath estranged my city and wasted my father's house and led me into captivity, it befitteth me to make terms of my dishonour with this tyranny for my life's space of dole,⁽⁷⁹⁾ and withhold the bitter hate in my spirit; but I weep beneath my cloak and hide an inly frost of sadness for my lord's despiteful doom.

Elect. Bondwomen, cumbered with our housewifery,
 Since ye are my companions to conduct
 This supplication, counsel me withal.
 What words were gracious and what orison
 Convenient, while I tender to my sire
 This duty of the chalice? Shall I say,
 'Tis but a love-exchange my mother sends
 To her dear husband by a daughter's hands?
 I dare not. With this offering shall flow
 No honied lie upon my father's tomb.⁽⁹²⁾
 Or with her chaplets⁽⁹³⁾ shall I furnish her
 Some common canting posy: "Flowers fair
 Deserve fair fruit"? Aye, bitter fruit of death!⁽⁹⁵⁾
 Or, damning her with silence e'en as she
 Despited her dead lord, shall I outpour
 This juicy posset on the earth and go,
 As one who sweeps the offal from a house
 New-purged,⁽⁹⁸⁾ with unconsenting eyes, and
 fling
 The urn behind my back? Come, with your wit

Abet ye my contrivance, O my friends
And loyal to one hate, which dwells in us.
Nor let that name of terror mew your hearts.
O'er all the world, for freemen and for you,
Poor chattels of the strong, fate's writ doth run.
Speak, prithee, if thou knowest a better way.

Chor. Lo, as thou wilt, I plight my tongue to truth
Upon this altar, which entombs thy sire.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾

Elect. Then by thy troth I pray thee, ope thy mind.

Chor. In the true name of kindness speak thy rote.

Elect. Who answer to the name of kind and kin ?

Chor. Thyself 'fore all, and all Aegisthus' foes.

Elect. Then I and thou are parties to my prayer.

Chor. Take counsel of thy knowledge and thy heart.

Elect. What other shall I number with our crew ?

Chor. Own thou Orestes, whom his house disowns.

Elect. Well said ! Thou hast admonished me aright.

Chor. Then word the count of bloodshed thus and thus.

Elect. I am thy novice ; rede me properly.

Chor. Invoke thou the pursuer, god or man.

Elect. Say, to what end ? To doom or to avenge ?

Chor. To slay the slayer. Utter it outright.

Elect. But is't a righteous prayer in Heaven's ear ? ⁽¹²¹⁾

Chor. 'Tis righteous to reward a foe with ill.⁽¹²²⁾

Elect. Hermes, almighty herald of the dead
And living, bruit my message in the grave ;
Summon me spirits of the depth to hear
Prayers of my piety. Yea, summon Earth
Herself, who genders all things and is quick
For ever with the germins⁽¹²³⁾ of her lap.
Father, to thy mortality I pour
This lustral draught⁽¹²⁹⁾ and cry : pity thy kin,
Me and Orestes, and rekindle light

In thine ancestral house. We are mere waifs,
 Our mother's merchandise, whom she hath sold
 To buy her fere and fellow-murderer,
 Aegisthus. I am but a bondswoman,
 Orestes outcast and disinherited,
 And they are revelling in harlot pride
 Upon thy handiwork. My father, hear
 This supplication : may Orestes come
 With vantage hither, and vouchsafe that I,
 E'en as my mother's heart and hands are foul,
 Be chaste and holy. Nor for us alone
 I pray. Oh challenge me thine enemies,
 Send thine avenger to requite thee, sire,
 And slay thy slayers : so I speak my ban
 'Twixt fair preamble and fair sequel.⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ Heaven
 And Earth and conquering Justice aid, and thou
 Unhoard thy favour unto us above.
 Come, crown ye this oblation that I shed,⁽¹⁵⁰⁾
 And speed my prayer with wailing, as 'tis meet ;
 Uplift your paean ⁽¹⁵¹⁾ and acclaim the dead.

Chor. Seeing our chalice hath run, come, wash away
 the wicked soilure of it with pure purling of tears ; let
 them e'en go perish with our lord, where he lieth amort
 in the twilight of sorrow and joy.⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ Hearken, O wor-
 shipful master, hear me from the dusk of thy spirit.
 Ototoi ! Ototoi ! Ah for a puissant warrior to deliver
 the house ; let him come forth as a war-god to the fray,
 poisoning the bended ⁽¹⁶¹⁾ Scythian bow in his hands, or
 amid the mellay plying hard his clinch'd sword !

Elect. The earth hath quaffed our service to my sire.

Hold ! Here is wonder ! Commune we of this.

Chor. Speak on ! My heart is dancing with amaze.

SPARTAN GRAVE-RELIEF



“Answer, O thou dead and blessed ”

Elect. This curlèd lock I saw upon the tomb.

Chor. Shorn of what man, or what deep-girdled⁽¹⁶⁸⁾
maid ?

Elect. Nay, 'tis no mystery beyond surmise.

Chor. Then prithee let thy youth instruct mine eld.⁽¹⁷¹⁾

Elect. None but myself would cut the hair for him.⁽¹⁷²⁾

Chor. Sooth, 'twas no duty of his felon kin.

Elect. 'Tis of familiar feather, passing like—

Chor. Familiar, sayest thou ; but of what roost ?

Elect. Our own ; it hath the semblance of our locks.⁽¹⁷⁶⁾

Chor. Is it perchance Orestes' stealthy gift ?

Elect. 'Tis very like his tresses, even his.

Chor. How came he hither at his deadly risk ?

Elect. 'Tis his love-favour sent⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ unto his sire.

Chor. Be it as thou wilt, 'tis pitiful, if he
Shall nevermore set foot upon this land.

Elect. Ah me, the anxious sight ! A sickly sweat⁽¹⁸³⁾
Searches my breast ; 'tis stricken with a smart
Of stabbing steel, and from these doughty eyes
Break bitter tears and spend their wasteful spray.
This hair—how can I deem that it belongs
To any of the townsfolk ? Yet 'twas not
His murderer, my mother, shore the tress
For some unmotherly, ungodly spite
Harboured against her children. Earnestly
To credit—nay, but 'tis a pleasant hope,
Orestes of his own dear locks hath vowed
This garnish. Would it were a messenger
And had a comfortable voice, to speak
To my distrained sense ! 'Twould tell me plain
To spurn the cheat of that accursèd head,
If it came thence ; but if it greeted me
“Sister,” then, father, might thy children mourn

As one and deck thy tomb and do thee grace.
But the gods know,—to them be our appeal—
In what a troublous sea our barque is tost.
Oh might the weakly seed e'en now be spared,
That yet shall wax unto a goodly stem !—
Look ye, another token,⁽²⁰⁵⁾ prints of feet
Alike and shapen like to mine withal.
Nay, 'tis a twofold imprint ; that the foot
Of some companion of his journey, this
Is his ; it tallies aptly with mine own
In tracery of tendon and of heel.⁽²⁰⁹⁾
My heart is throed and palsied utterly.

Orest. Ask for success to come, but do the gods
To wit, thy prayer is answered to the full.

Elect. What present godsend would'st thou have me
own ?

Orest. Thine eyes behold thy long-besought desire.

Elect. For whom then, if thou knowest, went my cry ?

Orest. I know, Orestes' name is all thy pride.

Elect. Prithee, what boon have I besought and won ?

Orest. Behold me, near to thee as I am dear.

Elect. What, sir, thou weavest some deceit for me ?

Orest. Then I am plotting to entrap myself.

Elect. Nay, but thou wouldest mock at my distress.

Orest. Why then, I mock myself ; for mine is thine.

Elect. Art thou Orestes, thou to whom I speak ?

Orest. Sooth, thou art slow to know me, whom thou
see'st.

Yet, when thine eye but spied this mourning
lock

And scanned the tracing of my feet, anon
Thy quick elated fancy flew to me.

Look at this curl, the pattern of thy head,

Thy very brother's—set it whence 'twas shorn,—
And see this broidery,⁽²³¹⁾ thy handiwork,
The threads thy batten pressed, the pictured
chase.⁽²³²⁾

Possess thyself; be not distraught for joy.
Remember all the malice of our kin.

Elect. O precious charge! Seed of thy father's house
And saviour, whom we wept in hope, put forth
Thy valour and redeem thine heritage.
Sweet heart of hearts, who hast my fealty
Fourfold; for I must dub thee, daughter-like,
My father and my mother;⁽²⁴⁰⁾ yea, to thee
Belongs the kindness that was hers, till hate
Exceeding turned the beam, and thine shall be
The love that was my sister's,⁽²⁴²⁾ till she bled
Upon that ruthless altar, and thou art
My brother proven true and worshipful.⁽²⁴³⁾
May Victory and Justice and the grace
Of Zeus, the third⁽²⁴⁵⁾ and mightiest, champion
thee!

Orest. Zeus! Zeus! Incline thine eyes, consider us.
Behold this eagle's brood forlorn, whose sire
A fell she-viper⁽²⁴⁹⁾ folded in her coils
Of death; his callow orphaned young are spent
With pinching hunger, for their thews are weak
To hale their father's quarry to the nest.
So look upon us twain; children are we,
I and Electra at my side, outcast
Together from one house and fatherless.
Nay, if thou spoil this eyrie of our sire,
Thy priest⁽²⁵⁵⁾ of worth and lordly worshipper,
What generous hand shall give thee holy cheer
Like his? Go, kill the eagle's race, thy signs

Shall find no wingèd way to credent hearts ; ⁽²⁵⁹⁾
No, nor on feastful ⁽²⁶¹⁾ days shall ministry
Of ours avail thee, if thou wither quite
This strong imperial stock of thy domain.
Tend, as thou can'st, and lift to high estate
Our house that seemeth fallen in the dust.

Chor. Children, dear children, silence !—as ye hope
To save your father's hearth—lest eavesdroppers
Blab all the secret to yon tyrant pair.
Oh may I live to see them lying stark
And wasting in the pitchy reek of fire. ⁽²⁶⁸⁾

Orest. Ne'er will the puissant lord of oracles
Fail me ; for in presageful wakings ⁽²⁷¹⁾ oft
He bade me pass this hazard and foretold
Plagues that should gather as a deadly frost ⁽²⁷³⁾
Upon my life-blood, if I reckoned not
My father's debt upon their heads, in ire ⁽²⁷⁵⁾
For my disseising, till the score were cleared
By death for death ; else should I make amends
Through long dstraint and loathly on my life
And person. Loxias, whose word is light
For mortal kind to stay Earth's malison,
Spake of no salve for me, ⁽²⁷⁹⁾ but blight that creeps
Apace with cruel fangs upon the flesh,
Gnawing the tissue, and white speckling hairs
Along its leprous trail. Again, he cried,
Again, the sprites of wrath should visit me,
From father's blood begotten ; ⁽²⁸³⁾ frenzy fierce
And maniac alarms from out the night
Wilder and vex the culprit as he stares
Aghast on darkness visible, shafts that rain
Darkling from hands infernal at the cry
Of death unheeded in the kin ; anon

They torture to the quick with brazen scourge
 And chase the lazar from his town ; no part
 Were his thenceforth in festal bowl or cup
 Of loving kinship,⁽²⁹²⁾ for the jealousy
 Of that dead sire unseen shall banish him
 From altar, house and hostelry ; at last,
 Forlorn of friends and honour, he shall die,
 A carcase stale and shrivelled to the core.
 Behoves me not to heed such oracling ?
 Yea, though 'twere false, the deed must yet be
 done.

Desires full many sway me, the god's hest,
 Great sorrow for my father, and the dearth
 Of livelihood withal constraining me,
 That this my burgh, the glory of the world,
 Before whose high ambition Troy hath fallen,
 Shall cringe no more to women twain ; for he
 Is womanish,⁽³⁰⁵⁾ or let him dare the proof.

Chor. Now by grace of Zeus⁽³⁰⁶⁾ the righteous
 Cause ensuing,
 Mighty Fates, move towardly !
 For the instant voice of Justice
 Tells her debtor's doom : " Let hatred
 On the tongue of hate recoil !
 Do and suffer." ⁽³¹³⁾—So from hoary
 Time the old refrain is echoed.—
 " Blood for blood, and blow for blow."

Orest. Thou spirit uncouth,⁽³¹⁵⁾ by what hap of
 word or act might I waft thee from afar a gleam to
 divide the shroud of darkness upon thy bed ? Albeit,
 my father, our laments are counted for grace and
 glory to the bygone heirs of Atreus.

Chor. Nay, child, no ravening fangs of fire⁽³²⁴⁾ may

quell the haughtiness of the dead ; his wrath is discovered betimes. He openeth his ear to your crying and lo ! the misdoer is declared.⁽³²⁸⁾ An ample bruit of lamentation, which is the due of a sire and parent, maketh inquisition for guilt.

Elect. List again, father, to our descant of tears ; 'tis a threnody of thy children twain, chanting thee our worship by thy tomb. Suppliants are we and exiles withal awaiting at thy grave. Is not evil every way dispread ? Is not mischief upon us as a giant unthrown !

Chor. Even now, if God doth purpose,
He will tune our tongues to brighter
Strain ; the pæan, and no deathful
Dirge, shall ring a princely welcome
At the tryst of loving hearts.⁽³⁴⁴⁾

Orest. I would thou hadst proudly died, my father, by some Lycian spear on the field of Ilios ; 'twere tolerable for thy house, wert thou entombed in a massy pile beyond the sea, and hadst left glory in thy home and raised a sign upon the pathway of thy children's life.

Chor. Then had he been a familiar of his comrades who perished nobly, an eminent prince and august beneath the earth and a minister of the sovereigns infernal ; ⁽³⁵⁸⁾ for in his lifetime he was a king even of them who are appointed unto royalty ⁽³⁶⁰⁾ and empowered to handle the staff of command.

Elect. Nay, father, not thy death beneath the walls, nor a grave with the rest in Troia's field of blood by the ford of Scamander : I would rather his slayers had been foredone by their own kindred, that the rumour

of their death might have come as a tale from afar, or ever I knew this trouble.

Chor. Child, 'tis well to prate of fortune
More than golden, more than windfall
Blown from lands beyond the North ! ⁽³⁷³⁾
Now the double scourge ⁽³⁷⁵⁾ is striking
Loud and deep ! The buried champion
Bides his hour to cope with hateful
Tyrant hands unclean ; his children
Have their vantage of the grave.

Elect. That shaft from thy lips throughly pierceth
his ear. Zeus ! Zeus ! Thou who sendest destruc-
tion on mortal kind from the pit : upon froward and
mischievous hands it waiteth betimes, yea, overpasseth
not a parent.

Chor. Vouchsafe me a full-breasted peal of triumph
o'er the death-blow of fere and leman ! Why should
I hide the thing that hovers withal in my thought ?
For anger is blowing bitterly at my heart, and vengeful
hate as a wind athwart the prow.

Orest. Fie, fie upon Zeus the full-fraught ⁽³⁹⁵⁾ god !
Will he never lift his hand and cleave their pates ?
Shall not the land have her surety ? From the wrong-
doers I claim amends. O Earth, hear this challenge,
and ye potentates of Hell !

Chor. Ne'ertheless 'tis ruled, the gory
Spilth upon the ground requireth
Other blood ; the olden murder
Calleth woe on woe to follow
In Erinys' fatal train.

Elect. How long, ye principalities of Hell, ye ghostly
sprites of wrath ⁽⁴⁰⁶⁾ so puissant ? Behold and consider

the remnant of Atreus' seed, how we are forlorn and disherited. Whither shall I turn, O Zeus?

Chor. My heartstrings tremble again and my bosom turneth to murk at the sound of your sighing. The burden of your voices for a while is a knell unto hope, but anon she beameth with a fair countenance, and I am stayed on courage.

Orest. Surely now is a burden of bitterness upon my lips; 'tis e'en a mother's cruelty that defieth charity, let her coax as she will. Oh, my soul is uncharitable and fierce as it had been wombed in a wolf.⁽⁴²²⁾

Chor. Erewhile I beat an Arian⁽⁴²³⁾ dirge for him, to a wailful drone as of the Kissian chantress. Ye might have seen us⁽⁴²⁵⁾ blood-boltered with the patter of blust'ring clenched hands, high, high uplifted, till my head groaned for the buffeting.

Elect. Out on thee, thou mother unmerciful, thou fiend and heartless, who gavest him the tearless burial of a foe, a king without his citizens, a spouse unlamented.

Orest. A carrion king in good sooth, and with her carrion shall she render him quittance. Yea, father, Heaven and my arm shall answer for it. I had liefer die than let her live.

Chor. Know this withal; he was mangled, hands and feet.⁽⁴³⁰⁾ Even as she hath buried him, so she entreated him, purposing to make thy young life grievous as death. Thou hast heard all the shame and the pain of it.

Elect. Ye mind me, how they murdered him anew; and I was thrust away, scouted as a vile thing, hatched in my chamber like a mischievous dog. My tears fell lightly indeed, and all my laughter was solitary

ARRIVAL AT THE TOMB



“I beat an Arian dirge”

moaning. Brother,⁽⁴⁵⁰⁾ indite that which I tell thee in thy thought.

Chor. Yea, indite it, but keep the calm pacing of thy wit and the bore of this tale in thine ears. Temper thyself to prove the sequel of that thou hast heard ; it behoveth thee to strike with a heart of steel.

Orest. Father, I adjure thee, succour thy kin.

Elect. Oh list to the burden of my tears.

Chor. All we arrayed cry out this alarm to thee : obey, come forth into the light, succour us against our foes.

Orest. Our war-god shall war on them, and our right shall implead them.

Elect. Beware, O ye gods, do utter justice upon them.

Chor. A horrible quaking of Hell is about me ; 'tis e'en the footfall of olden doom that tarrieth not at the summons of your prayer.

'Tis Perdition handselling a scourge, that shall beat hideous time to the bloody travail of our house. Ah, what shall comfort her mournful groaning or assuage her throes ?

She hath one salve to lay upon her wounds :⁽⁴⁷¹⁾ herself of her own instance must she wage the feud of blood. In the name of the gods infernal is this chant.

Answer, O thou dead and blessed.

'Tis thy children's invocation ;

Champion them to victory.⁽⁴⁷⁸⁾

Orest. Father, dethroned by an unkingly death,
Vouchsafe that I win back thy regency.

Elect. Deny me not, my father, mightily
To snare Aegisthus and escape his toils.

- Orest.* Then would the folk appoint thee all thy due
Of stately feasts ; else will thy grave be cold
Mid the fat reek of offerings⁽⁴⁸⁵⁾ through the land.
- Elect.* And I will bring thee of my heritage,
Wed from thy house, my nuptial chalice full,⁽⁴⁸⁷⁾
And render chiefest homage to thy tomb.
- Orest.* O Earth, release my champion for the fray.
- Elect.* Yea, send him bright and hale, Persephone.
- Orest.* Bethink thee, father, of the murd'rous bath.
- Elect.* And of the net's new-fangled bravery.⁽⁴⁹²⁾
- Orest.* They gyved thee, father, in strange manacles.
- Elect.* They mocked thee with a bridal veil⁽⁴⁹⁴⁾ of death.
- Orest.* Dost waken, father, at our bitter cry ?
- Elect.* And holdest thy beloved head alert ?
- Orest.* Send Justice armed to combat for thy kin,
Or set me back to grapple with thy foes,⁽⁴⁹⁸⁾
If thou wilt take thy fair reprise on them.
- Elect.* Sire, once again I call thee to behold
Us, nestlings of thine eyrie, at thy grave.
Pity the treasure of thy very loins,
Thy boy⁽⁵⁰²⁾ and girl withal. Oh wipe not out
The seed of Pelops. So, albeit dead,
Thou art alive. For children are the voice
And memory of the dead,⁽⁵⁰⁵⁾ the floats that hold
The trawl and keep the flaxen ravel safe
Above the deep. Give ear ! We make this plaint
For thee ; to grant our prayer is thy redress.
- Chor.* Now hath your long-drawn rote, to my content,
Atoned his dumb, spiteful burial.
But since thy heart is straitly set to act,
Up ! Hazard thou thy fortune on the deed.
- Orest.* I will ; but 'tis no errant questioning,
What set her on this business ? What imports

This skeleton of service to the slain ?
It beats surmise. With this poor charity
They thought to comfort dull obstruction.⁽⁵¹⁷⁾
No !

Men may not count the price of sin in gifts.
“ ’Tis wasted labour to outpour thine all
’Gainst only blood : ” so runs the parable.
I would fain hear thy story, if thou knowest.

Chor. I saw and know, my son. Her godless heart
Was wakened by a ghastly wraith of night ;
So, for her peace, she sent this offering.⁽⁵²⁵⁾

Orest. What was her dream ? Hast heard ? Can’st
tell it clear ?

Chor. She saith, ’twas of a serpent that she bare.

Orest. Quick, to the sum and sequel of thy tale !

Chor. She swathed and bedded him like any babe.

Orest. What feeding craved her brutish imp anon ?

Chor. She gave him suck full kindly ; so she dreamed.

Orest. And wounded not the loathly thing her pap ?

Chor. Yes, in the milk he drew were gout of blood.

Orest. No mirage was her vision, but a man.

Chor. She woke from slumber quaking with a cry,
Whereat the blindfold lights began to blink
And flare in every brasier ; then forthwith ⁽⁵³⁸⁾
My lady sent to pour unto the dead
This simpling ⁽⁵³⁹⁾ that she fancied for her pain.

Orest. Lo now, to Earth and to my father’s tomb
I pray, her dream be all fulfilled in me.
It tallies aptly, if I read it true ;
Seeing this snake, cast of one womb with me,
Slipped me his coils within the swaddling-clothes,
And curdled my sweet mother’s milk with blood,
’Twas her own doom she shrieked in sick amaze,

A presage of her murder violent
 And monstrous as the thing she nursed ; for I,
 I am that deadly dragon of her dream.
 No otherwise, I trow, thou'lt augur me.

Chor. God grant ! But, as thou lovest us, advise
 What we and she shall do or leave undone.

Orest. I rede ye simply ; enter thou within,
 And prithee cloak this plot of my device.
 So may our craft with murderous recoil
 O'ertake the traitorous pair, who slew our prince,
 And hoist them in one noose. Such was the word
 Of Loxias, our lord of wisardry,
 And as Apollo bodeth, it shall be.
 I will present me at the palace-gate ⁽⁵⁶¹⁾
 In traveller's proper equipage, as one
 Upon the highway claiming hostelry,
 Or spear-friend ⁽⁵⁶²⁾ if ye will, with Pylades.
 We will essay to utter, I and he,
 Parnassus' highland speech, ⁽⁵⁶⁴⁾ tuning our
 tongues
 To chime in Phocian accent ; if it hap,
 Anent this madding trouble in the house,
 No porter but will turn a sullen face,
 We will e'en linger there till passers-by
 Make sinister surmise and cry, " Go to !
 Why doth Aegisthus, if he knows, nor fares
 Abroad, deny this suppliant at his door ? "
 But if I pass the threshold of yon court
 And cope him on my father's seat, or he
 Enter anon and front me, ere he asks
 " Whence comes this stranger ? "—yea, before
 he lifts
 And drops (I warrant ye) his felon eyes— ⁽⁵⁷⁴⁾

This nimble blade shall pen and pounce him dead.
So shall Erinys quaff her fill of death
E'en to the third outpouring, ⁽⁵⁷⁸⁾ blood unblent.
Now keep thou ⁽⁵⁷⁹⁾ sentry in the house within,
That our contrivance may run pat ; and you
I counsel, charily withhold your voice ;
Discreetly time your silence and your speech.
Enough ! Let him ⁽⁵⁸³⁾ watch o'er me in the lists,
Of whom my sword shall challenge victory.

Chorus.

The earth is full of troublesome things and terrible,
that she hath gendered, and the sea gathereth abundance
of noisome beasts within her arms ; in the heights
of the firmament go fires that move unto-
wardly ; ⁽⁵⁸⁹⁾ the fowls of the air and the cattle can
tell, when the whirlwinds cast their rage abroad.
But who can declare the fierce daring of a man, ⁽⁵⁹⁵⁾
and the fell lusts of fiendly women, which harbour
with madness ? Love, that is outrageous in the female
kind, turneth them as brutes to strange consortings. ⁽⁶⁰¹⁾

Let every one ponder, who is not silly of heart, how
the daughter of Thestius ⁽⁶⁰⁵⁾ miserably slew her child
with a fiery device : she burned up the red brand,
wherewith he waxed from his first crying when he
came forth of the womb, and it continued with the
count of his lifetime until his destined day. A name
abhorred in story hath she withal, who did Nisus to
death by means of his enemy, even Scylla the bloody
and dog-hearted ; all for a Cretan necklace of wrought
gold, wherewith Minos beguiled her, ⁽⁶¹⁸⁾ she spoiled him,
her fere, of the imperishable lock of his head, when

he was drowsing unwarily, and Hermes overtook him.⁽⁶²²⁾

'Tis a grim tale and heinous that I essay to sum ; albeit 'twere inconvenient, if thou wouldest rehearse in the light that loathly wedding, which shameth our house, to magnify another's unwifely craft and spite against a manly warrior, and the paling of his pride, and the hearth that waxed cold, and the sceptre that is weak and womanish.⁽⁶³⁰⁾ But the chiefest of sins is that whereof the bruit hath gone forth from Lemnus, even a howling "woe worth the day !" If aught horrible be done, 'tis likened to Lemnian murdering.⁽⁶³⁴⁾ Heaven's ban is upon the bloodguilty kindreds of earth. They are disherited and vanish utterly ; for that which God hath rejected no man honoureth. Are not mine instances worthily indited every one ?

A sharp sword in the hand of Justice is set against the heart, and throughly doth it wound.⁽⁶³⁹⁾ For unrighteousness shall rightfully fall in time, when it is not trodden under foot but transgresseth the holiness of Zeus. Justice hath an anvil fixed, whereon Fate,⁽⁶⁴⁷⁾ being her armourer, forgeth a good sword betimes : then cometh the brooding Erinyes of mighty name, and layeth the imp of olden bloodshed at the door of the house to discharge it of defilement at last.

Enter ORESTES and PYLADES.

Orest. Ho, lad ! A summons from the courtyard gate !⁽⁶⁵³⁾

What ho within ! What ho within, I say !
Once more I challenge lord Aegisthus' house
To open in the name of hospitage.

Serv. Enough ! I hear. Whence art thou ? Of what land ?

Orest. Acquaint him, whosoe'er is master here,
That I await with tidings of import ;
And hasten, for Night's dusky chariot ⁽⁶⁶⁰⁾
Hies up ; 'twere time a stranger on his road
Slipped anchor in some public hostelry. ⁽⁶⁶²⁾
Summon your lady forth, if one hath charge
And power in the palace ; or your lord
Were fitter. Where men parley, bashfulness
Darkens not conversation. Man to man
Speaks out the pith and purport of his tale.

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.

Clyt. Bespeak ye, Sirs, I pray, of this our house
Whate'er is meet and serviceable ; beds
Are yours, warm baths to ease your weariness,
And soothest welcome in our eyes. ⁽⁶⁷¹⁾ If aught
More close is to transact, I promise ye
It shall concern my manly counsellor.

Orest. I am a Daulian, bound on pilgrimage
From Phocis unto Argos, burdening
None other with my pack ; as thence I fared
Afoot, the wayworn yokel whom thou see'st,
A stranger all unknown encountered me,
One Strophius, a Phocian, as I learned
In colloquy : we communed of our ways,
And he adjured me : " Seeing, sir, thy road
Is e'en to Argos, fail not to report,
Orestes (note it well) is dead ; convey
His kinsmen's charges, whether they elect
To fetch him thence or leave him in the tomb,

A homeless alien evermore ; for now,
Poor wight ! his dirge is done, his dust is pent
Within its brazen casket." Lo, thou hast
My tidings. If ye be his lordly kin,
I wot not, but 'tis meet his parents know.

Clyt. Ah what a fall is here ! Undone ! Undone !
Thou curse, whose griping hold is on this house,
How dost thou sight our absent ones afar
In their asylum with thy bow alert
And deadly ! Woe is me ! Bereft and bare !
Now, when Orestes walked so warily,
And kept his feet without the miry pit,
That hope which housed with us and sobered still
Thy merry revel—ah ! record it blank.

Orest. Fain would I win acquaintance with my host
And wealthy entertainment for the meed
Of goodly tidings. What is lovelier
Than hospitable kindness ? ⁽⁷⁰³⁾ Yet methought
I were a sinner to my heart confessed,
If I accomplished not this friendly charge
For all my promise and your courtesy.

Clyt. Nay, thou shalt forfeit naught of thy desert,
Nor have worse welcome of the house ; this news
Must e'en have sped with other visitors.
Howbeit, sirs, 'tis time ye were refreshed
From your day's rote of travel, as is due.
I charge thee, ⁽⁷¹²⁾ as thou art accountable,
To see him and this other—be he friend
Or page ⁽⁷¹³⁾—in our guest-chamber well bested,
And free of this our homely hostelry.
For that which hath befallen, I will confer
And counsel with the master of this place,
Whose loving-kindness shall console my loss.

Chorus.

When shall we, my sister captives,
For Orestes
Lift a mighty shout triumphant?
Hallowed canopy of earth, thou holy
Pile,⁽⁷²²⁾ that hidest here the royal
Corse of him, our navy's hero,
Lo! 'tis e'en the hour for guileful
Suasion hand in hand with Hermes
From the nether night patrolling
To direct the fray of swords.

[Enter the NURSE.]

Mischief, methinks, hath passed the threshold.
See,

There goes Orestes' nurse, in tears withal.
Whither afoot, Cilissa,⁽⁷³²⁾ through the gate,
With grief, an unpaid lackey, at thy heels?

Nurse. I have an instant errand from the queen.
She would e'en clap Aegisthus on her guests
To question stoutly, as a man with men,
Of their report. All glum, when we were by,
She mourned and mowed with laughter in her
eyes,

That gloated for this message from abroad
Of import all too true; in sooth it nicked
Her expectation and announced a world
Of teen unto this house. And yonder wight,
How will the hearsay flush and gladden him!
Ah me! How oft soe'er my breast was wrung
For all the ills of yore, the grievous coil,
That huddled long on Atreus' heritage,

Yet ne'er was loss so ruinous ; the rest
 With a stiff heart I suffered, but my soul's
 One dear concern, Orestes, mine own charge,⁽⁷⁴⁹⁾
 My nursling from the womb : a restless brat
 And shrill o' nights ! Oh, 'twas a fretful time,
 And profit none I had of it. A babe
 To tend in swaddling-clothes is coy, forsooth,
 Like any kidling, for he hath no tongue
 To blab of thirst or hunger. If he itch
 To puke, the babish belly waits no help.
 How oft I prophesied amiss, how oft
 To make amends I washed his clouts again.
 Yea, since I took the boy, his father's trust,
 As feeder and as fuller I was bound
 To double prenticeship. But now alack !
 They tell me he is perished, and I go
 To fetch yon foul destroyer of the house,
 And speak my pleasant tidings in his ear.

Chor. With what appointment would she have him
 come ?

Nurse. Appointment, sayest thou ? I take thee not.

Chor. Faring alone, or with his soldiery ?

Nurse. She bids him bring a retinue of spears.

Chor. Then, as we hate our master, waive that hest,
 But do her errand blithely ; hint no fear.
 Charge him to come—him only—with all
 speed.

Dark tales are best deciphered in the dark.⁽⁷⁷³⁾

Nurse. What ! Is thy heart so light at this report ?

Chor. Nay but if Zeus shall put our woe to flight ?

Nurse. Not so ! Orestes, our last hope, is gone.

Chor. 'Tis an untimely soothsay. Wait and see.

Nurse. Hast thou some knowledge counter to the tale ?

Chor. Go, quit thee of thy message and enact
My bidding. Heaven shall fulfil the rest.

Nurse. Good ! I will go my way and heed thy word.

Chor. May it end well, and God be bountiful !

Chorus.

Grant now my entreaty, O Zeus, lord god of Olympus, vouchsafe us present success and true, even as our desire is pure and discreet. The words of my mouth are lawful altogether ; Zeus, be thou his keeper. Lo, he is within their gates ! Advance him before his foes, O Zeus ; for, if thou exalt and strengthen him, he shall make thee a willing recompense, twofold, yea threefold. Stay thou the child of thy belovèd, this fatherless colt who draweth the yoke of his affliction, that his running be not out of time. Oh may we behold him perfect in the race, and his steps beautiful as music,⁽⁷⁹⁷⁾ when he enlargeth them upon the ground !

Hear, ye kindly gods, whose sanctuary is deep within the wealthy chamber.⁽⁸⁰¹⁾ Up ! Redeem ye the former bloodshedding with fresh revenges. . . . [Then] may murder wax old and no more beget his kind in this abode. And thou, who dwellest in the ample cave's mouth, thy goodly stead,⁽⁸⁰⁶⁾ grant that the house of our prince may look up and put off her gloomy veil⁽⁸¹¹⁾ and behold him brightly as a lover with eyes of liberty. May the son of Maia graciously abet him, and blow full as a strong wind to further his doing thoroughly. He shall discover the blind ways,⁽⁸¹⁵⁾ when he willeth. His speech is unsearchable ; he compasseth his face with darkness in the night, neither standeth he any more to view by day.

Now ensueth the hour, when the women shall utter their shrilling peal fair-set for the deliverance of the house, and a tuneful chime of mourning⁽⁸²³⁾ therewith: 'tis well with the city;⁽⁸²⁴⁾ for us, verily, for us 'tis rich profit, and for my friends perdition is o'erpast. Therefore fear thou not, when it befalleth thee to act: if she cry unto thee, "O my child," utter the knell of thy father's name and wind up this grievous, deadly skein. Take the heart of Perseus⁽⁸³¹⁾ to encourage thee in the cause of thy kin below and of them upon the earth; yea, hew down that imp of murder, spring upon him and enjoy thy fierce wrath, when thou makest a horror of blood in the house.

Enter AEGISTHUS.

Aeg. A rumour of strange news hath sped my steps
Here on a summons; 'tis some travellers' tale
Of import all unlovely. They aver
Orestes' death: a parlous load, in sooth,
To foist upon our galled and bloodied house,
Whose wounds are open yet and festering.
Am I to deem it quick and waking truth,
Or some mere waif of womanish alarm
Blown in the air and dead as soon as born?
Can'st give me rational report of it?

Chor. We have heard somewhat, but go in thyself,
Ask of the strangers. A refurbished tale
Is nothing; cope the informant face to face.

Aeg. I will confront and question him anew,
If he were very witness of the death,
Or doth but voice some indistinct report.
I trow, he will not hood my clear-eyed wit.

[*Exit.*

Chorus.

Zeus, with what appeal or burden
Meet of prayer ⁽⁸⁵⁶⁾ shall I approach thee ?
Ah, what faithful
Words and fair shall win to thee ?
Now the deadly blade, befoulèd
Still with lordly blood, will shatter,
Yea, dethrone in utter ruin
Agamemnon's house for aye ;
Or our godly champion, kindling
For the burghers' rule of freedom
Bonfire light, shall gain his fathers'
Ample wealth. He goeth listed
Sole against the twain. The final ⁽⁸⁶⁶⁾
Bout, Orestes, shall be thine !

Aegisthus (within)—

Oh ! Woe's me !

Chor. List, oh list ! How goeth it ? What doom is
for the house ?

Hush ! Stand apart, ⁽⁸⁷²⁾ that we be not suspect
On this dark count, and wait upon the deed.
Belike, the fray is ended even now.

Enter a SERVANT.

Ser. Help ! Murder ! Here's your master hurt to
death.

Murder I cry again, and yet again !
Aegisthus dead ! Nay, open, open quick !
Back with the bolt, unbar the women's door. ⁽⁸⁷⁸⁾
Up ! Who's alive there ? Help ! But, save
the mark,

Alive ye needs must be to help the dead !

What ho !

I waste my strength on sluggards drowsed and deaf.

Why comes not Clytemnestra ? Ware ! Or soon
Justice shall have her head upon the block.

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.

Clyt. What would'st thou, so alarming all the house ?

Ser. The dead hath killed the living ; ask no more.

Clyt. Ah me, I understand thy riddling saw
Too well ; 'tis craft for craft, and death for death.
Where is the murd'rous axe ? ⁽⁸⁸⁹⁾ Quick ! Give
it here.

Is it defeat or victory ? I will know.

Yea, here and now mine agony shall end.

Orest. Hold ! Thou art tracked. ⁽⁸⁹²⁾ See, I have done
with him.

Clyt. Woe's me ! Aegisthus dead ! My lord ! My
love !

Orest. Lovers, forsooth ! One tomb shall be your bed
For aye, and death shall hold thee true to him.

Clyt. Ah dear my child, forbear ! Pity this breast, ⁽⁸⁹⁷⁾
Where thou wast wont to slumber, and to suck
With full-fed drowsy lips thy mother's milk.

Orest. My mother ! Shall I spare her, Pylades ? ⁽⁸⁹⁹⁾

Pyla. Wilt thou abjure half Loxias' behest,
The word of Pytho, and thy sacred troth ?
Hold all the world thy foe rather than Heaven.

Orest. So be it ! Thy worthy counsel shall prevail.
Come, I will slay thee yonder at his side, ⁽⁹⁰⁴⁾
For whom thou didst despise my father ; die

THE DEATH OF AEGISTHUS.



Palmer & Co. N.Y.

"See, I have done with him."

And sleep with him in death, who lived to turn
Thine honest love and duty into hate.

Clyt. I nursed thee, and would pass with thee to eld.⁽⁹⁰⁸⁾

Orest. Thou slewest my sire and shalt thou dwell with
me ?

Clyt. My child, 'twas Fate consented to the deed.

Orest. The self-same Fate doth now ordain thy death.

Clyt. Reckest not, O my child, a mother's curse ?

Orest. A mother, who didst cast me out forlorn !

Clyt. Thou wert no outcast in a friendly house.

Orest. Me, me—no slave—thou soldest for a price.

Clyt. I sold thy birthright ! For what recompense ?

Orest. I am ashamed to tell thee of thy shame.

Clyt. Nay, tell thy father's wantonness withal.⁽⁹¹⁸⁾

Orest. The housewife may not blame her working mate.

Clyt. A woman, child, is ill divorced from men.

Orest. And housewives starve without the husband's
toil.

Clyt. Thy hand against thy mother, O my child ?

Orest. I shall not slay thee ; thou wilt slay thyself.

Clyt. Beware the hounds that venge a mother's blood.

Orest. Aye, and a sire's. How scape I, sparing thee ?

Clyt. Deaf as the tomb ! Dead to my dying plaint !⁽⁹²⁶⁾

Orest. My father's deadly doom prescribes thine own.

Clyt. The snake ! Behold my nursling ! Woe is me !

Orest. Thy fearful dream was all oracular.

Yea, die the death ; thy sin hath found thee out.

[*Exeunt.*

Chor. Woful adieu to them, ill-fated pair !

But since Orestes' suffering hath coped

This cruel tale of bloodshed, 'tis enough.

The light⁽⁹³⁴⁾ hath not clean perished from your
house.

Chorus.

Even as the heavy doom of Justice came at last on Priamos and his children, so came this lion pair, these two imps of war, into Agamemnon's halls : our outcast pilgrim hath sped forthright upon his heavenly errand, ensuing Pytho's careful hest. Sing and triumph,⁽⁹⁴²⁾ for that our lordly house is restored from cumber and wasteful scath ; with yon defilers twain her ashen plight hath past.

Another came withal, who hath sleights of combat⁽⁹⁴⁷⁾ and vengeful wiles at heart ; but she who upheld the fighter's arm and breathed her deadly wrath on the foe was Dikè,⁽⁹⁵¹⁾ soothly named of men, for she is the true maid of Zeus. She is belated and halt, but Loxias with his shrill call from out the mighty cavern in his demesne of Parnassus hath fetched her in righteous guile ; for his godlihead is let perforce from serving iniquity, and 'tis meet to regard the empery of the heavens. Lo, the dayspring is manifest ! Nay, lift up⁽⁹⁶²⁾ thy head, O house of our bondage, that art rid of thy heavy curb ; full long hast thou lain in the dust. . . . For soon shall Time effectual enter our doorway, when he hath thoroughly purged and swept the hearth of bane and stain. And for us sojourners of your dwelling the die of her fortune⁽⁹⁶⁹⁾ shall fall fair again. Lo, the dayspring is manifest !

Enter ORESTES.

Orest. See there my father's sceptred murderers
And partners in the ravin of his house.
Who looks may read their story ; lovers yet,
And wedded as they sat in majesty

Together, faithful to their plighted vow ;
Yea, death hath held them doubly to their bond.⁽⁹⁷⁹⁾
And ye, whose ears must hear this woe, behold
The snare, which coiled about my wretched sire,
Tangled and gyved him, hand and foot : ⁽⁹⁸²⁾ for
this,

Though I should speak it fair, what foulest name
Were apt ? A hunter's gin ? A deadly pall
That hearsed him, head and feet, within the bath ?
A trawl ? A stake-net ? Or a deadly train
Of shackles ? Sooth, some thievish knave pro-
fessed,

Some cutpurse of the streets or kidnapper
Of travelling folk might own it ; busy hands
Were his and hot his murd'rous heart, who plied
A tool so deft. Stand round, ⁽⁹⁹¹⁾ unfold this thing,
Wherein your lord was pent ; display it full
Before the sire, not mine, but Helios,
Whose eye is bent on us, that he may see
Her impure handiwork and testify
In the hour of judgment, ⁽⁹⁹⁵⁾ that the right was
mine

To prosecute my mother unto death.
I reckon not of Aegisthus and his life.
He hath the adulterer's lawful doom ; ⁽⁹⁹⁸⁾ but she,
Who set this hellish snare against her lord
And parent of the burden of her womb,
Once loved and now his bloody foe confessed,
Lamprey or viper be she, ⁽¹⁰⁰²⁾ deem ye not
That venomous heart of hatred breathed a taint
Full fraught of hardy malice unabashed ?
Rather had I go childless to the grave,
If Heaven will, than house with such a mate.

Chorus.

Ah the rueful work ! By loathly
Death foredone, alas ! thou leavest
Him to trouble evergreen.

Orest. Wrought she the deed, or not ? This damnèd
robe

Keeps the red imprint of Aegisthus' sword,⁽¹⁰¹¹⁾
A dye of blood that with the years hath marred
Each strand of gorgeous tissue. Here behold
My witness ; now and here, not from afar,
He hath my laud and moan.⁽¹⁰¹⁴⁾ The pity of it,
Thou dumb unfeeling web, that I must do
And suffer with my suffering race, to win
Pollution for my crown of victory.

Chorus.

Roadway none hath life for mortals
Clear of scath, but taketh ready
Toll of troubles evermore.

Orest. Hear ! I know not the end ; I am as one,
Whose horses whirl his car without the course,⁽¹⁰²²⁾
Swept helpless in the tumult of my brain.
There is some terror at my heart, that hums
A jangling strain, a fierce delirious reel.
But unto you, who love me, I avouch
And notify, while yet I have my sense,
I rightly did to death this murderer,
This mother whom my father's blood defiled,
This recreant to Heaven. I aver
One pregnant motive ⁽¹⁰²⁹⁾ of my daring. He,
The holy voice of Pytho, Loxias,

Charged me to follow him and go' exempt
From baneful consequence ; but if I failed—
Nay, I forbear to tell the penalties ;
No arrows of the tongue will reach that tale
Of agony. Behold me now arrayed
With olive-branch and chaplet, ⁽¹⁰³⁵⁾ to draw
near

Earth's hallowed navel and the deathless fire ⁽¹⁰³⁷⁾
That shines, they tell, for ever at the feet
Of Loxias, self-banished ⁽¹⁰³⁸⁾ on the count
Of kindred blood ; the lord oracular
Bade me to sue unto no hearth but his.
Witness the men of Argos, one and all,
In aftertime, how came this woe to pass.
Outlawed and outcast from your land I flee,
And dead or living leave ye this report.

Chor. Nay, voice no boding ; ⁽¹⁰⁴⁵⁾ burden not thy
tongue

With baleful utterance : for thou hast won.
See this twy-headed snake not scotched, but
killed.

Yea, thy swift sword hath set all Argos free.

Orest. Hold !

Bondwomen, look ! They are like Gorgons,
robed

In dusky vesture, and their locks astir
With tangled snakes ! I dare abide no more.

Chor. What madding wraiths are these, child of thy
sire

Well-loved ? Thine is the vantage. Stay thy
fear.

Orest. These are no horrors of mere fantasy.

I know, they are my mother's hounds of wrath.

Chor. The blood is fresh upon thy hands ; for this,
Belike, thy troubled sense is wildering.

Orest. Help, lord Apollo, help ! They swarm on me
With loathly eyes, that void a rheum of blood.

Chor. One shrift thou hast ; 'tis Loxias, whose touch
Shall thoroughly acquit thee from thy pains.

Orest. Ye see them not, but lo ! they stare on me.
Ah, they will hunt me down ! Away ! Away !

[*Exit.*

Chor. May fortune go with thee, and grace divine
Protect and guide thee timely to the end !

Chorus.

Lo, in might of birth gigantic ⁽¹⁰⁶⁷⁾
Storms have gathered
Thrice upon the royal halls.
With those murdered babes the cruel
Tale was opened ;
Then Achaea's royal captain
Bled and weltered
In the deadly bath ; and be it
Turn of saviour now or death-blow,
Who shall answer ?
Where shall ruin end or whither
Surge before its rage be spent ?



EUMENIDES

PYTHONESS.

First to the gods I pray, entitling chief
Gaia, the primal prophet ; ⁽²⁾ Themis next,
Her daughter ⁽³⁾ and successor, as one tale
Avers, in this her seat oracular.
With her good will and in despite of none,
Phoebe, ⁽⁷⁾ another Titan child of Earth,
Presiding in her turn, bequeathed the place,
E'en as a natal gift, to Phoebus, heir
Of that his grandam's name. He straight for-
sook

The lake ⁽⁹⁾ and scars of Delos, taking ship
For Pallas' ⁽¹⁰⁾ busy haven, from whose shore
As forth he fared to claim his high abode
On our Parnassus, lo ! Hephaestus' sons ⁽¹³⁾
Went pioneering, yea, with homage rare
Escorted him and made a pleasant land, ⁽¹⁴⁾
Where wilderness had been. Our governor,
Delphus, ⁽¹⁶⁾ with all the people, magnified
His coming, and he sits in order fourth,
Where Zeus enthroned him seer and made his
wit

Instinct with lore divine ; for Loxias
Is but interpreter of Zeus his sire.

To all these gods I tender first their due
 Of prayer. And next in honour I bespeak
 Pallas Pronaia ⁽²¹⁾ chiefly ; then, the nymphs
 Who dally with unearthly visitants
 In yon Corycian grotto, ⁽²³⁾ haunt of birds.
 Homage withal to Bromius, ⁽²⁴⁾ no more
 A stranger here, since his fair chivalry
 Followed their god's command and Pentheus
 died

In toils of his contriving, like a hare. ⁽²⁶⁾
 All hail to Pleistus' fount ⁽²⁷⁾ and hail to thee,
 Poseidon, in thy power, and Zeus, supreme,
 Effectual. ⁽²⁸⁾ This said, I mount my chair ⁽²⁹⁾
 Of prophecy ; and may the gods vouchsafe
 Communion yet more blest than heretofore.
 Whate'er Hellenic deputies await,
 Let them cast lots for entry ; ⁽³²⁾ so 'tis ruled,
 And Heaven in such wise guides mine oracling.

Oh horrible to tell, and horrible
 Unto mine eyes the sight that drave me back
 From Loxias' abode with heavy feet
 And nerveless ; for my legs lacked strength to
 run

And borrowed of my hands ! A crone ⁽³⁸⁾ afraid
 Is but a babe uncradled ! As I stepped
 Within the festooned shrine, ⁽³⁹⁾ I saw a wretch
 Unhallowed, crouching at the omphalos, ⁽⁴⁰⁾
 A suppliant unshrived ; he holds a sword,
 That reeks of murder in his bloodied hands.
 Therewith (so much mine eyesight shall avouch)
 A thickset wand of olive, chastely girt
 With ample garlanding of sheeny wool.
 But couched upon the seats affronting him

Slumbers a troop of monsters womanish,
Yet women are they not, but Gorgons⁽⁴⁸⁾—no,
Nor yet to Gorgons will I liken them.
Such figures limnèd⁽⁵⁰⁾ I have seen, in act
To rifle Phineus' board ; howbeit these
Are wingless⁽⁵¹⁾ darksome sprites of loathly mien
From head to foot ; their nostrils' drowsy breath
Is mischievous⁽⁵³⁾ and rank, a hideous rheum
Drips from their eyes,⁽⁵⁴⁾ their raiment is unmeet
For holy images⁽⁵⁵⁾ or any haunt
Of men. What race begat this company,
What motherland hath nursed them and avers
Herself unscathèd of her brood, nor rues
Her wasted pains, I know not, nor mine eyes
Have seen. Enough ! Our puissant Loxias
Shall answer for the issue. Lord of spells
And wisard leechcraft,⁽⁶²⁾ he, whose grace assoils
Houses defiled, shall he not purge his own ?

APOLLO.

I will not fail thee ; near or far away,
I am thy guardian always, and my hand
Shall not be light upon thy foes. Behold
Entrapped and sunk in sleep these madding fiends,
These haggard wenches, with whose horrid eld
Nor God doth ever mate, nor man, nor beast.⁽⁶⁹⁾
Dark as the sin that gave them being, dark
E'en as themselves their hold, eschewed of men
And gods Olympian, in the nether pit
Of Tartarus. Yet must thou fly amain,
And brace thine heart. For they will hunt
thee far
O'er the world's beaten highways, many a reach

Of land and sea, and many a sea-girt town.
 But fret thee not nor falter, ere thou plant
 Thy weary feet in Pallas' city. There
 Take sanctuary, clasping in thine arms
 Her golden image,⁽⁸⁰⁾ till her folk's assize
 Shall hear my charitable pleas, and I,
 Avoucher of thy bloody act, shall find
 Means to discharge thee wholly of thy pain.

Orest. My lord Apollo, be thy hand alert
 To earnest thine intent of equity.
 Do justice in the measure of thy strength.

Apoll. Beware ! Let naught appal nor daunt thy wit.
 I charge thee by our sonship, brother mine,⁽⁸⁹⁾
 Hermes, yclept the guide,⁽⁹¹⁾ to shepherd this
 My suppliant and guard him, e'en as Zeus,
 Our common father, owns thy cognisance,
 The gospel of all outlaws o'er the earth.⁽⁹³⁾

[*Exeunt : the Ghost of CLYTEMNESTRA appears.*]

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Sleep on ! What service have I of your sleep ?
 For now I go amid the phantom dead
 Ashamed, despised of you among them all,
 And their reviling ceases not, because
 I slew him. Yea, I tell you, I endure
 Deepest reproach from them ; but for my sake,
 Whom mine own kin so foully have abused,
 Who bled by a son's hand, not one is wroth
 Of all your powers. Behold, who dealt this gash
 Upon my heart ; for lo ! the earthy film,
 Which hides by day the morrow of our days,
 Doth open to the sleeping spirit's sight.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾
 Sooth, ye have lapped of my drink-offerings,



“He, whose grace assails
Houses defiled, shall he not purge his own?”

Gift upon gift, and well ye were apaid
With sober spilth and wineless ; ⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ many a feast
Of sacrifice ye made upon my hearth ⁽¹⁰⁸⁾
Aflame in the night-watches, ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ which no god
Divides with you. And ye must trample all
My duty 'neath your feet. For he is fled !
He slipped you like a fawn ; aye, lightly sprang
From forth your toils and flouts you to your face.
Quicken your drowsèd wit, ye sprites of Hell.
Hear Clytemnestra breathe her deadly pain,
And cry her instant challenge in your dreams.

[*A muttering.* ¹¹⁷

Aye, moan ! But he hath fled upon his way.
My kinsfolk have their champion, I have none. ⁽¹¹⁹⁾

[*A muttering.*

Orestes gone ! My son ! My murderer !
And thou art drowsed nor reckest of my hurt.

[*A groaning.*

Nay, hush thy slumb'rous moaning ! Wake anon !
What work, save my undoing, hast thou done ?

[*A groaning.*

Slumber and toil have sworn their covenant
To strike our fearful dragon ⁽¹²⁷⁾ all amòrt.

[*A loud groaning redoubled.*

Chor. 1. Seize him ! Seize him !

Chor. 2. Seize him ! Seize him !

Chor. 3. Mark !

Clyt. 'Tis but a quarry of thy restless dream
Thou huntest like some fretful hound asleep.
What ! Art thou e'en o'erwearied, and wilt whine
And drowse away thy slothful discontent ?
I'll wring thy heart, if it hath grace enough
To feel the prick of true compunction. Up !

Disbowel thy diseaseful fiery fumes,
 And vent thy gory breath upon him. Up,
 And blight and blast him with a second chase.⁽¹³⁹⁾

Chorus.

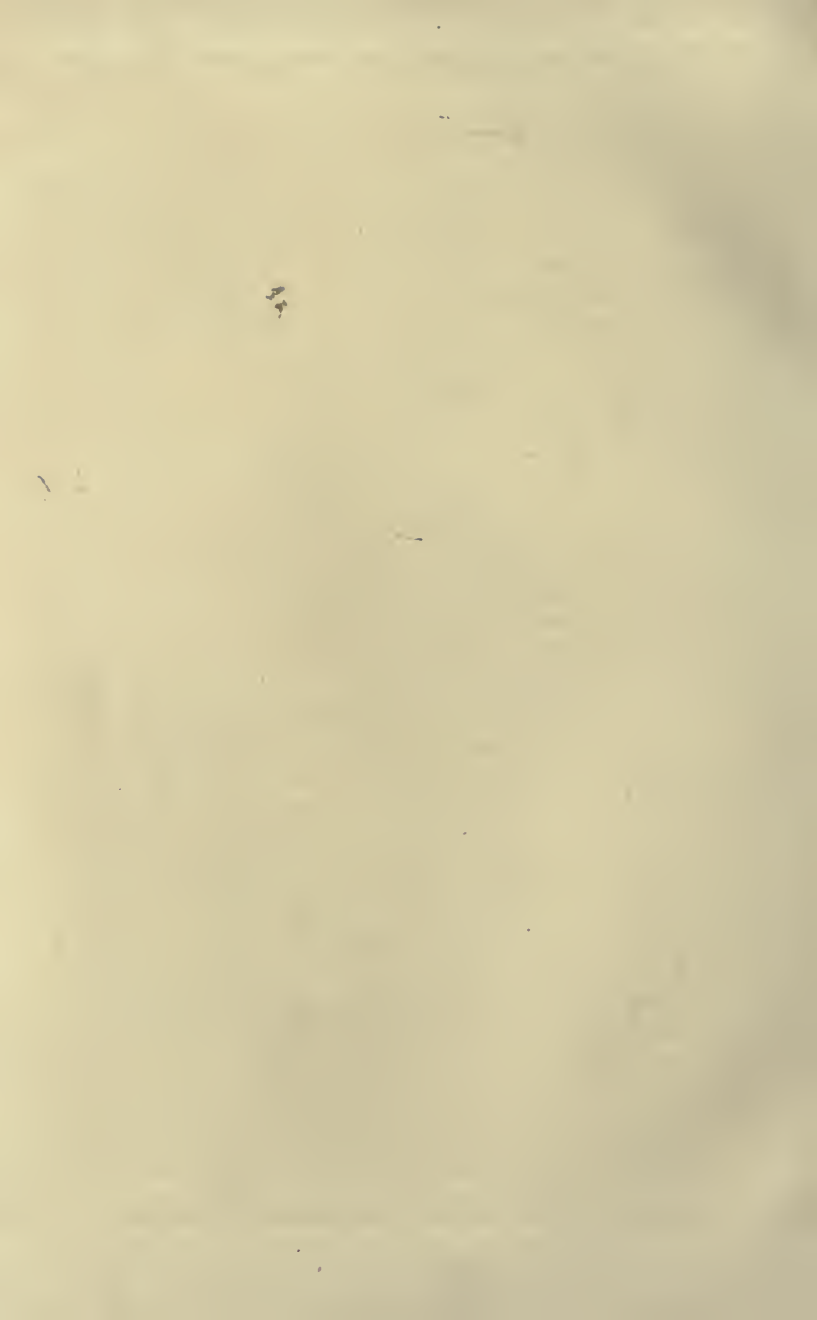
Alack, sisters mine, alack ! grievous hurt—
 Sore injury and wanton, woe is me !
 A pitiful heavy discomfiture hath o’ertaken us. Our
 quarry hath slipped us and escaped the snare.
 The robber sleep hath purloined my prize.
 And thou, son of Zeus, art forelaying us.
 Thou youthful god, who ridest down our eld !
 That unkindly child hath suborned thy grace to covin,
 forsooth, and gross indulgence for his mother’s
 blood.
 Wilt thou justify his ungodliness ?
 A challenge fell upon my dream and lashed me, as
 ’twere a driver bearing me hard with fast-clenchèd
 goad at my heart and my reins.
 The ribald reproachful voice searcheth me thoroughly,
 like a fierce gaoler’s scourge, unto the quick.
 Despiteful is the younger race of Heaven, an outrage-
 ous tyranny ! Yon altar-seat⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ is red from the
 cope to the foot.⁽¹⁶⁵⁾
 Behold ye, Earth’s navel stinks, flecked with a foul
 attaint of bloodguiltiness upon its face.
 Thou hast defiled thy hearth and sanctuary in thy
 self-mettle, thou who ensamplest the seer ; re-
 creant to Heaven for men’s idle sake, thou dis-
 honouredst the ancient Fates.⁽¹⁷⁴⁾
 Beshrew his malice ; nathless I will fang yon guilt-
 ridden wight in Earth’s nether hold ; yet one

THE STRIFE FOR THE TRIPOD.



Pollard & Allen Ph. Sc.

"Earth's Navel."



more familiar of the brood shall do fiendly mischief on his pate.

APOLLO re-enters.

Apoll. Out, out, I charge ye, straightway from this place.
Quit ye my holy closet, or belike
This golden bowstring will let slip on thee
A winged glist'ring snake,⁽¹⁸²⁾ and thou wilt heave
From out thy writhing gorge the crimson spume
Of mortal blood, which thou hast quaffed.

Avaunt !

This is no dwelling for your feet to touch.
Nay, get ye to the land of bloody dooms,⁽¹⁸⁶⁾
Beheadings, gouged eyes, knives at the throat,
And lusty boyhood cankered in the bud,⁽¹⁸⁸⁾
Hacking and stoning and loud agony
Long-drawn of men spine-broken.⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ Such
the cheer

Ye love and therefore are ye loathed of Heaven.
Lo, in your horrid favour ⁽¹⁹²⁾ 'tis confessed
Full plain ; some lion's bloodied lair were meet
To house your kind. Ye shall not neighbour
here,

To fix pollution on mine oracle.

Depart, ye goats, who herd in solitude ;
No god hath heart to pasture such a flock.⁽¹⁹⁷⁾

Chor. My lord Apollo, hear us in our turn.
This is thy mere contrivance ; thou alone
Art author, not abettor, of the deed.

Apoll. And prithee, why ? Stint not thine argument.

Chor. "Go, slay thy mother," was thy oracle.

Apoll. Aye, to avenge his father : wherefore not ?

Chor. Thou did'st engage with him to shed that blood.

Apoll. Yea, to this house I bade him sue for shrift.

Chor. And us thou gibest, who escorted him.

Apoll. My temple doth disdain such visitants.

Chor. Nay, 'tis but our appointed ministry.

Apoll. A pretty office ! Is that all thy pride ?

Chor. We hunt the mother-slayer from his home.

Apoll. What, if the mother's hand hath slain her lord ?

Chor. That were no shedding of pure kindred blood.

Apoll. Go to ! Thou dost degrade and set at naught
That sacred troth, which wifely⁽²¹⁴⁾ Hera pledged
To Zeus, and she of Cyprus, who creates
The dearest human bond, is clean belied
And scouted in thy plea. For wedlock hath
Its fatal sanchion,⁽²¹⁷⁾ mightier than oaths,
Within the keep of Justice. Dost thou slur
Thy count and hast no eyes of wrath, if spouse
Slay spouse ? Nay, then, I challenge this thy
ban⁽²²¹⁾

Upon Orestes. His offence, forsooth,
Lies heavy on thy heart ; for hers, I trow,
Thou hast but half-faced advocacy. Go !
To heavenly Pallas' court be my appeal !

Chor. Nay, I will quit yon culprit nevermore.

Apoll. Pursue him then and ply thy wasteful toil.

Chor. I have my honours ; spare thy cavilling.

Apoll. I would not take thy honours for a gift.

Chor. Oh, thou art proud and mighty at the seat
Of Zeus ! But he shall meet his doom in us.
My feet are on the trail of mother's blood.

Apoll. I will e'en help and shield my suppliant.
Dread were the wrath in Earth and Heaven, if I
Cast him unshriven from the mercy-seat.⁽²³⁴⁾

[*Exeunt : the scene changes.*]

Orest. Sovran Athene, by Apollo's will
I crave thy grace, who am a pilgrim banned
Yet not bloodguilty,⁽²³⁷⁾ nor with hands un-
cleansed ;

The sanguine stain is paled and quite outworn
With use of earthly houses and highways,
And weary traversing of land and sea.
Wherefore, obeying his oracular hest,
O goddess, I draw near thy dwelling-place
And holy image. Here, in sanctuary,
I will await the trial of my cause.

Chor. Aha ! The silent spy upon his path
Betrays our felon clear as blood can speak.
Follow, as hounds that track a wounded fawn.
This dribbled gore discovers his retreat.
My very heartstrings labour with our long
Distressful march. Yea, I have scoured the
earth

From shore to shore, and swept across the sea,
Swift as a wingèd galley on my feet.
Perchance he is anigh in cover. Soft !
I catch the pleasant odour of man's blood.⁽²⁵⁴⁾

Look ! Look, I say ! Spy everywhere, lest the
slayer flit and pay us no scot.

There ! See him again kneeling for life's sake, fast to
our great lady's image,⁽²⁵⁹⁾ fain of her assize for
his deed.

That may not be ; a mother's blood returneth never
from the ground. Alack ! The lifeblood that
is spilt doth fleet to the void.

Mine earnest is the red juice, which thou shalt give
me to suck from thy living limbs, thy carrion
wine whereon I will batten.

Thy bones shall stare upon thee or e'er I hale thee
below, to torment thee for thy mother's pain.

Whosoe'er of sinful mortal kind hath violated god or
stranger or parents, there shalt thou see him re-
quited in the measure of his deeds.

Yea, for Hades⁽²⁷²⁾ is mighty beneath the earth, when
he maketh inquisition of all misdoing upon the
vigilant tables of his heart.

Orest. Well tried and prenticed in the painful lore
Of absolution, I can speak betime
Or hold my peace.⁽²⁷⁸⁾ In this adventure he,
The master of his craft, hath loosed my tongue.
For lo, my mother's blood upon my hands
Is drowsed and sicklied ; mine attaint doth cleave
No more. While yet 'twas fresh, at Phoebus'
hearth

I had my saving baptism of the blood
Of swine.⁽²⁸³⁾ 'Twere long to reckon all the
folk,

Whom I have coped in scathless intercourse.

Time waxing old undoeth⁽²⁸⁶⁾ everything.

And now with voice devout and innocent

I call your queen Athena to her place,

To win me by her aid, and make her gain

In friendly conquest of my land and us,

Burghers of Argos,⁽²⁹⁰⁾ her allies assured

And ever stedfast. Whether now she plants

Her step erect or rests her shrouded foot⁽²⁹⁴⁾

In Libya's distant haunts, by Triton's stream,

Her native water, championing her own,

Or with a bold commanding eye surveys⁽²⁹⁵⁾

The plain of Phlegra, may she hear, as gods

Hear from afar, and come to my release.

ATHENA POLIAS



"She plants her step erect"

Chor. Nay, not Apollo nor Athena's might
Can rescue thee, O wretched castaway !
Joy is exterminated from thy very soul,
Vile wraith and bloodless victim of the pit,⁽³⁰²⁾
Our living banquet ; for thou shalt not pour
Thy lifeblood on the altar unto waste.
What ? Hast no answer ? Scornest thou my
speech,
Thou felon consecrate and kept for us ?⁽³⁰⁵⁾
Now shalt thou hear our spell of witching
song.⁽³⁰⁶⁾

Come, array we all a roundel ⁽³⁰⁷⁾
For our purpose,
And proclaim in direful descant,
How each mortal score is written
Well and truly in the record
Of our sisterhood of wrath.
Vengeance none of ours doth visit
Him who sheweth undefiled
Hands ; he goeth free and scathless
To the bourn. But he, who cloaketh,
As this culprit, his uncleanness,
In the strict assize, where surely
Waits our witness on the dead,
When the bloody count is balanced,
He shall know us face to face.

Hear me, O mother Night,⁽³²²⁾ my mother, from
whose womb I went forth to punish⁽³²³⁾ the quick and
the dead ! The son of Lato would rob me, to my
disgrace, of this craven, appointed to atone for his
mother's blood.

Wretch, devoted and foredone !
 Lo ! our sacrifice is won !
 'Tis Erinys' binding spell,
 Doleful minstrelsy,
 Deadly discord in thy brain,⁽³³⁰⁾
 Deadly blight, thy blood to drain.
 'Tis the doleful chant of Hell
 Soothly sung for thee.

'Tis our founded office, yea, straitly set in the skein
 of Fate,⁽³³⁵⁾ to hunt every mortal wight, who frowardly
 molesteth his kindred, until he go down to the grave ;
 though he die, he is nowise free.

Wretch devoted and foredone !
 Lo ! our sacrifice is won !
 'Tis Erinys' binding spell,
 Doleful minstrelsy,
 Deadly discord in thy brain,
 Deadly blight, thy blood to drain.
 'Tis the doleful chant of Hell,
 Soothly sung for thee.

From the solitary vantage of our birthright we defy
 the sons of Heaven ; not one hath fellowship in our
 feasts. Nor part nor lot is mine in white gala
 weeds.⁽³⁵²⁾ Mine election is the overthrowing of a
 house, wherein Ares cuddleth on a kinsman's sword.
 Oh, we give brave chase to the runagate and moulder
 the heyday in his blood.

Our charge doth brook no neighbour's interloping ;
 mine empery alloweth no breedbate god to prevent
 my suppliants.⁽³⁶²⁾ For Zeus hath e'en disdained to
 parley with our bloody abhorred race. Howbeit with

a mighty ramp I fling upon the trail, and ruin goeth striding with me to o'erbear the swift.

The crown of man's pride is trodden down and sinketh below the ground, at the rushing of our dusky robes and the mischievous dancing⁽³⁷⁶⁾ of our feet.

The evil-doer knoweth not of his falling for the blindness of his heart, and the abomination of darkness that is upon him. He heareth not the sound of rumour; he seeth not the gathering of a thick cloud upon his house.

Awful are we, who inhabit eternity,⁽³⁸¹⁾ and our sleight never faileth, the recorders of wickedness, in whom is no relenting. With worship none nor recompense, we beat the pitfalls of the seeing and the sightless withal, in the visible gloom⁽³⁸⁷⁾ apart from Heaven.

Wherefore know all the earth our name of fear, and hear this our plenary charter, which we hold of Fate and grace divine. Yea, I have my title of the ages and my pride of place, albeit my sentry is in the sunless murk of Hell.

Enter ATHENA.

Athen. I caught the voice of thine appeal afar,
Seizing me, by Scamader, of the land,⁽³⁹⁸⁾
Which your Achæan earls and generals
Assigned to me entirely, root and branch,
An ample portion of their spoils of war
Sealed and reserved to Theseus' children.

Thence,
This chariot, look ye, and this mettled team,⁽⁴⁰⁵⁾
The swirl of bellied aegis, strong as wings,

Wafted my feet unwearied. Now there
falls,

Not fear, but marvel, on mine eyes, to see
This uncouth pilgrimage. Say, one and all,
Who are ye—thou, sir, here in sanctuary
Beside mine image, and yon brood unlike
To any sprung of mortal seed, nor known
Where god with goddess communes face to face,
Nor cast in mortal mould. But to affront
A neighbour for no grudge were mockery,
Eschewed of comely usage and of right.

Chor. My story, maiden child of Zeus, is brief.
Our mother is the sullen Night, our name
Wrath-sprites ⁽⁴¹⁷⁾ in our abodes beneath the
earth.

Athen. I know your birth and proper cognisance.

Chor. Sooth, thou shalt learn our dignities anon.

Athen. Nay, speak it plain, if thou would'st rede my wit.

Chor. 'Tis ours to hunt the murderer from his home.

Athen. Where, prithee, hath thy fugitive his bourne?

Chor. In a far deathful vale of discontent.

Athen. What! Is it to that hell thou houndest him?

Chor. He hath a mother's blood upon his soul.

Athen. Was there no sterner threat constraining him?

Chor. A mother's blood! What goad should drive to
that?

Athen. I have but heard one party and one plea.

Chor. He will refuse the challenge and the oath. ⁽⁴²⁰⁾

Athen. Thou would'st be just in title, not in act.

Chor. Why? Sure, thy logic hath the reason pat.

Athen. Ensuit no wrongful vantage of an oath.

Chor. Put us to witness, then, without demur. ⁽⁴³³⁾

Athen. Will ye entrust the judgment unto me?

Chor. Yea, for thy worth and worthy lineage.

Athen. Sir, thy rejoinder I will hear ; but first
Declare to me thy country and thy kin
And fortunes ; then address thee to their charge,
Since justice gives thee faith to kneel, as knelt
The suppliant Ixion,⁽⁴⁴¹⁾ name of awe,
Before this image on my hearth. To all
My questions make one pregnant, plain reply.

Orest. Lady Athena, I will first undo
One sore surmise, which thy last words import.
I have no ban upon me ; ⁽⁴⁴⁵⁾ soilure none
Cleaves to my guiltless hand reposing here
Upon thine image. Lo, I tender thee
This weighty proof : a spell of silence lies
By rule upon the slayer, till a priest
Hath gashed some suckling of the flock to purge
His stain. Behold, I am absolved of mine
By blood and water spilt ere now for me
In holy places. So would I rebut
That doubt. Now, would'st thou of my kindred know,

I am an Argive. Storied in thy ken
Is Agamemnon's name, who was my sire,
Thy fellow marshal of the ships, what time
Thou madest desolation where was Troy
And Ilion. Homeward thence he fared, and
died

A death disgraceful by my mother's hand,
That wrought her heart's black purpose in his
house,

Yea, trapped and shrouded him in cunning toils,
My timely ⁽⁴⁶¹⁾ witness of that crimsoned bath.
Give ear to my avowal : I, restored

From very exile, took my mother's life
 In fee for mine own father, blood for blood.
 Nor I alone, but Loxias with me
 Is answerable ; for he spurred my heart
 With threats of trouble, if I failed to take
 The penal forfeit. Was it just, or no ?
 Try thou the issue ; I will e'en accept
 What doom soe'er befalls at thy assize.

Athen. This matter is too high for mortal wit,
 Nor mine the right to arbitrate a suit
 For blood so hotly waged ; and thou withal
 Art here in sanctuary, a suppliant
 Perfect and pure ; thy presence brings no taint
 Nor blame upon my town, which welcomes thee.
 Yet may I not refuse these ministers.
 They have their honour, and if victory
 Reward them not, the venom of their rage
 Will fall in slow, consuming pestilence
 Upon the land. Such choice is laid on me,
 Whether they go or bide, a painful strait.
 But since the cause hath lighted in my charge,
 I will appoint me judges pledged and sworn
 For doom of bloodshed, and mine ordinance
 Shall stand unto all time. Now summon all
 Witness and proof ye may, for appanage
 Of justice. When I come, I will select
 The noblest of my city to adjudge
 The quarrel in all truth and fealty.⁽⁴⁸⁹⁾

Chorus.

Lo, if the injurious plea of this slayer prevail, the
 ancient ordinance is untimely fordone. This deed
 will forthwith temper mortal kind to frowardness ;

yea, a sword hangeth in the armoury of time, whereon is blazoned full many a parent's death.

For the eyes of our vengeance shall no more run to and fro through the earth. I will set murder utterly abroad, till every man shall ask, when is woe to cease or abate,⁽⁵⁰⁵⁾ and noise his neighbour's trouble and babble of rotten salves without avail.

Then let not the downfallen cry unto us nor drone his refrain : "Ah Justice ! Ah the seat of Erinyes !" I wot, many a father will bemoan him and mothers cry for their hurt, because the temple of Justice is wrecked.

Fear must needs keep watch and sentry betimes on the soul ; with sorrow soberness⁽⁵²¹⁾ cometh meetly. What city or man, whose lightsome heart nurseth no dread, will regard justice any more ?

Betwixt licence and subjection elect thy way of life ; the manifold providence of Heaven alway directeth the mean⁽⁵²⁹⁾ to thrift. 'Tis a pregnant saying withal : violence⁽⁵³³⁾ is a true child misbegot of ungodliness, but a sound heart hath rich issue of blessing and gladness.

This is the sum of my commandment : reverence the seat of Justice, nor dash thy godless foot against it for purblind greed ; else art thou forfeit and thy doom shall surely ensue. Wherefore let every man crown his parents with worship, and do grace and honour unto the worthy stranger in his house.⁽⁵⁴⁷⁾

Whoso of his free will and purpose⁽⁵⁴⁹⁾ ensueth justice, he shall gather plentifully and reap not destruction at any time. But for the iniquitous and stiff-hearted, I aver, he shall make jetsam of the heaped spoil of his unrighteousness, when he is scattered, horn⁽⁵⁵⁷⁾ and halyard, by a sudden blast.

He is overthwarted in the flood and none heareth him save the fiend,⁽⁵⁶⁰⁾ who rejoiceth to lurch his hot ambition ; for behold ! he is distressed and astonied and cannot beat off the land. His fortune is broken upon the rock of justice ; he foundereth for evermore, an emptied wraith unwept.

ATHENA *re-enters with* APOLLO, ORESTES, *and the*
AREOPAGITES.

Athen. Call silence, crier, and constrain the host.

Then let your Tyrrhene trumpet⁽⁵⁶⁷⁾ thrill the
sky

And, charged with breath that is of earth,⁽⁵⁶⁸⁾
attune

Its haughty clangour in the people's ear.

Now, while your council gather in their place,

'Tis meet that all the burgh stand mute with
him,⁽⁵⁷³⁾

To hear mine everlasting ordinance

And aid the due decision of this cause.

Chor. Nay, keep thine own dominion. What concern
Hast thou, my lord Apollo, in this case ?

Apoll. For this man's sake, my lawful suppliant,
Whose sanctuary was my hearth, because
To mine account is laid that mother's blood
Whereof I purged him, I am come to plead
And witness likewise. Open now thy court,
And let thy wit adjudge this difference.

Athen. The assize is open. 'Tis for you to speak,
Who are pursuers, and in proper rote
Rehearse the preface of your argument.

Chor. Many are we,⁽⁵⁸⁵⁾ but brief our questioning.

So be thy answers pat and pertinent.

Say, hast thou slain thy mother. Aye, or no?

Orest. I slew her; I demur not on that count.

Chor. Lo now, thou hast thy fall, the first of three.⁽⁵⁸⁹⁾

Orest. Oh spare thy whooping; I shall fling thee yet.

Chor. How did'st thou slay her? Thou must answer that.

Orest. Know then, I drew my sword upon her throat.

Chor. Who was thy tempter? Who thy counsellor?

Orest. His hest divine, who witnesseth for me.

Chor. So 'twas our oracler, who lessoned⁽⁵⁹⁵⁾ thee?

Orest. I am content; he hath bestead me well.

Chor. In yonder urn awaits thy discontent.

Orest. I trust my buried sire will succour me.

Chor. Trust in the dead? Trust her thou did'st to death!

Orest. My mother was twice guilty, twice defiled.

Chor. How may that be? Thy judges fain would know.

Orest. She slew my father and her lord withal.

Chor. Death hath acquitted her, but thou dost live.

Orest. Why slept thy persecution, while she lived?⁽⁶⁰⁴⁾

Chor. She was not of the blood of him she slew.

Orest. Am I my mother's kinsman, e'en in blood?

Chor. O thou unclean, disownest thou the womb
That nursed thee, and the blood that is thy
own?

Orest. Now witness thou, Apollo, and expound,
If this were lawful bloodshed; for the deed,
E'en as alleged, is proven by default.
Thou, of thy wisdom, weigh it in the scale
Of right, and rule my pleading 'fore this court.

- Apoll.* Ye of Athena's high tribunal, list !
 I, the true seer, will tell ye naught but truth
 And justice. Mark withal the potency
 Of "justice" on my lips. I never spake
 From my prophetic seat concerning man,
 Woman or city, save upon the hest
 Of Zeus, Olympus' sire and mine. His will
 I charge ye now to further. For an oath ⁽⁶²¹⁾
 Is mighty, but a mightier is Zeus.
- Chor.* 'Twas Zeus, forsooth, who put it in thy mouth
 By foul despite to slur a mother's claim,
 So that Orestes but avenged his sire.
- Apoll.* How liken ye their deeds ? A lord to die,
 High-born, who held from Zeus the sceptre's
 pride, ⁽⁶²⁶⁾
 And by a woman's hand, no Amazon
 With her impetuous pursuing bow.
 Nay, hear thou, Pallas, how he fell, and ye,
 Her court, whose verdict shall adjudge this cause.
 Hot from the field, his prize and purchase won,
 With loud fanfaronade ⁽⁶³¹⁾ receiving him,
 E'en as his foot o'erstepped the bath, she hung
 A closèd robe about him, and within
 That mazy curtain hacked her spouse to death.
 So perished he, the lordly admiral
 And king all-worshipful. Bethink ye, sirs,
 What woman did this thing ? Burn not your
 hearts,
 O righteous judges, in this hour of doom ?
- Chor.* What ! Zeus is jealous for a father slain ?
 Yet was the ancient Cronos prisoned, sire
 By son divine. Thou dost gainsay thyself.
 Sirs, I adjure ye, mark the inference.

Apoll. Not so, ye loathly fiends, abhorred of Heaven.
That was no deadly hurt. Who binds may
loose ⁽⁶⁴⁵⁾

As lightly of his own resource. But none
Can raise to life the dead, whose mortal blood
Earth's dust hath drunk. Yon emperor, my
sire,

Who shuffles the vast world without a throb
Of his indomitable heart, e'en he
Is master of no spell to charm the grave.

Chor. Beware, what man's defence thou dost abet.
Shall he, who spilt his mother's kindred blood,
Dwell here in Argos in his father's house?
What altar of the town will suffer him?
What clansman of them all wash hands with
him? ⁽⁶⁵⁶⁾

Apoll. Give ear again and mark mine utterance
Of truth. Men say "a mother's child," but she
Is nurse, not mother, of the quickened germ.
The male is parent; she in alien wise ⁽⁶⁶⁰⁾
Keeps safe the seedling life, if it escape
God's blight. My doctrine stands upon this
proof:

A sire may be without a mother. Here
Is present evidence, this maid of Zeus,
The pride of all Olympus, who eschewed
The womb's dark nursery; ⁽⁶⁶⁵⁾ yet goddess none
Could bear a scion like to her. Enough!
'Tis my intent, O Pallas, that thy town
And people win to greatness: for that cause
I sent my suppliant to thy hearth of grace,
That he should plight thee everlasting faith,
And thou, O goddess, gain an ally more.

Yea, long and sure this covenant shall bide
Between his children and thy people's seed.⁽⁶⁷³⁾

Athen. Will ye I close the pleading and command ⁽⁶⁷⁴⁾
A true and honest verdict of the court ?

Chor. We have discharged our arrows to the last,
And bide the end in stern expectancy.

Athen. What would ye ? How may I avoid offence ? ⁽⁶⁷⁵⁾

Apoll. Our parley, sirs, is done ; 'tis yours to vote
And guard the oath unsullied in your hearts.

Athen. Hear now, ye Attic folk, 'fore whose assize
Bloodshed is first arraigned, this ordinance.
The host of Aegeus ⁽⁶⁸³⁾ henceforth and for aye
Shall keep this hall of judgment on the mount
Of Ares : here ⁽⁶⁸⁶⁾ the Amazon's array
Camped in their tents, what time they waged
their feud

On Theseus ; here they raised their upstart walls
Against your bastioned burgh, and sacrificed
To Ares, whence this rocky pile hath yet
The war-god's cognisance. ⁽⁶⁸⁹⁾ And here shall
awe

And fear, its kinsman, let my citizens
By day and night withal from wickedness,
If they disturb not their own polity.
Foul the pure spring with offal, and thy lips
Shall drink of mire, not water. ⁽⁶⁹⁵⁾ So I rede
My townsfolk : cherish ordered liberty
And free obedience. Cast not fear amain
From out your city. For what man is just,
Who fears not ? Lo, this dread majestic place,
Ruling your hearts, will be a keep and watch
For land and town, whose like is not on earth
From lonely Scythia unto Pelops' bounds. ⁽⁷⁰³⁾

By lucre undefiled, in honour rich,
And prompt to punish, I establish here
Your country's safeguard, ever vigilant
For those who sleep. This lesson in your ears
I leave, my burghers. Rise ye now and cast
Your ballots faithfully, and judge the cause
As ye are sworn in honour. I have done.

Chor. Nay, but I counsel you, do no despite
To us, whose wrathful presence threatens your
land.

Apoll. I charge you, disappoint not nor defy
Mine oracles, which are the voice of Zeus.

Chor. Not thine by right is the assize of blood ;
Thy shrine henceforth is perjured and attaint.

Apoll. What ! When Ixion sought our mercy-seat
For that first murder, was my sire at fault ?

Chor. Prate as thou wilt, my malice shall return
Upon this country, if I lose my cause.

Apoll. I shall defeat thee. Title hast thou none
In our Olympus nor the elder Heaven.

Chor. Aye, in like fashion thou did'st lure the Fates
To cheat the grave, man's bourn, in Pheres'
house.⁽⁷²⁴⁾

Apoll. What fairer service than to serve my host
And pious votary, when need befell ?

Chor. Thou did'st befool our hoary sisterhood
With wine, to bring the ancient law to naught.

Apoll. Oh spit thy venom ! But thy wrath shall fall
Light on the land, and thou wilt lose thy suit.

Chor. Ride down mine eld in thy young pride ; I
wait

Impatient for the verdict, and my wrath
Scarce pent is gathering against your town.

- Athen.* My vote avails, before the doom is summed,
 And it shall stand Orestes in good stead.⁽⁷³⁵⁾
 Born, and beholden to no mother, I
 With undivided heart prefer the man
 In all save wedlock. I am for the sire⁽⁷³⁸⁾
 Wholly, and will not overprize her death,
 Who slew the lord and guardian of her home.
 So, on an even tale, Orestes wins.
 Ye judges, who are charged to tell the votes,
 Up and discharge your office. Clear the urns.⁽⁷⁴²⁾
- Orest.* O bright Apollo ! what will be the doom ?
- Chor.* Seest thou what they do, dark mother Night ?
- Orest.* For me the halter⁽⁷⁴⁶⁾ or the light of life.
- Chor.* Ruin for us or higher dignity.
- Apoll.* Sirs, duly reckon ye⁽⁷⁴⁸⁾ each urn's receipt,
 And in your sorting be there no amiss.⁽⁷⁴⁹⁾
 One ballot cast or missing from the count
 Hath stablished or abated many a house.
- Athen.* The lots are equal, and the culprit stands
 Acquitted fully of bloodguiltiness.⁽⁷⁵³⁾
- Orest.* Hail to thee, Pallas, my deliverer !
 Thou hast restored me, exiled and outcast
 From house and fatherland, and they will say
 In Hellas : " Lo, he hath his Argive right,
 His father's heritage again," by grace
 Of Loxias and Pallas and the Third,⁽⁷⁵⁹⁾
 The saviour and supreme, who saveth me,
 E'en for the ruth he bare my murdered sire,
 From these, my mother's pleaders. Ere I go
 Upon my homeward way, I plight my troth⁽⁷⁶⁴⁾
 Thus to the land and people of my love :
 For all the volume of the coming years
 No captain of my nation shall affront

Thy borders with his bravery of war ; ⁽⁷⁶⁷⁾
For I, from out my dwelling in the tomb,
Whene'er they violate my covenant,
Will thwart their march with mischievous rebukes,
Malign their enterprise, and chill their hearts,
Till they repent them of their pains ; but sure
Abides my benison, while they ensue
The stedfast way, and their confederate arms
Magnify Pallas' city. Fare ye well,
Thou and thy burgesses. Strong be your hold
To throw your foemen, strong for your defence
And strong to crown your spears with victory. ⁽⁷⁷⁷⁾
[Exit ORESTES.]

Chorus.

Upstart brood of Heaven, ye tear
From our hands and overbear
In your lust the law of ages.
Daughters of the Night forlorn,
Let our wrath requite their scorn ;
Be the woes of men our wages !
Lo, the soil shall drink our bane ;
For a deadly dew shall rain,
Cankered hearts' envenomed spume, ⁽⁷⁸⁴⁾
Blight of leaf and blight of womb,
Till the noisome dust entomb
Fruit of earth and seed of man
Mouldering beneath our ban.

Athen. I charge ye, take it not resentfully.
'Tis no defeat ; the verdict, fairly passed
On the divided vote, degrades not thee.

Nay, heard ye not the blazon that went forth
 From Zeus? Prophet and witness spake as one,
 To quit Orestes of his penalty.
 Oh spare to fling your angry malison
 In wasteful blight upon the land, nor shed
 Your cancr'rous tears in dire unearthly dew
 To batten sourly on the velvet blade.⁽⁸⁰³⁾
 Lo, 'tis a faithful promise; ye shall have
 Your dark sequestered shrines⁽⁸⁰⁵⁾ amid a land
 Made righteous; yea, your altar-stones⁽⁸⁰⁶⁾ shall
 flow
 With fatness, and my burgh shall be your pride.

Chorus.

Upstart brood of Heaven, ye tear
 From our hands and overbear
 In your lust the law of ages.
 Daughters of the Night forlorn,
 Let our wrath requite their scorn;
 Be the woes of men our wages.
 Lo, the soil shall drink our bane,
 For a deadly dew shall rain,
 Cankered hearts' envenomed spume,
 Blight of life and blight of womb,
 Till the noisome dust entomb
 Fruit of earth and seed of man,
 Mouldering beneath our ban.

Athen. Think not ye are demeaned, nor grossly wreak
 Your fell displeasure on a famished land,
 Hurting the humbler race. Mine office, ware!
 Is stayed on Zeus, whose arm, ye wot, is strong.
 To me and to none else in Heaven is known
 The chamber, where his bolt is locked and sealed.

But let it sleep ! Be no more obdurate ;
Scatter no tares of thy rank, scathing tongue,
To make our soil a wilderness. Allay
The bitterness of thy dark-leavened soul ;
For thou shalt share the pride of my abode.
Thine shall be gifts, firstfruits of many a field,
For seed of holy wedlock,⁽⁸³⁵⁾ thine for aye ;
And thou wilt ne'er repent this covenant.

Chorus.

Woe ! Woe ! that we must wander,
Hell's only shame and slander,
We, outcast heirs of distant eld,
Doomed by yon gods to cower
Before their craft and power,
From olden pride of place expelled !
Oh sore the anguish, Mother Night !
Fury we breathe and utter spite ;
List to our rage, defend our right !

Athen. I will forgive thy choler, since thy days
Are more than mine, thy wisdom weightier,⁽⁸⁴⁹⁾
Albeit of Zeus I have a potent wit.
If ye depart from us to foreign folk,
Ye will be lovesick, I foretell, for this
My country, when the waxing flood of time
Wafts golden glory to my burgesses.
For thou withal beside Erectheus' pile⁽⁸⁵⁵⁾
Shalt have thy stately seat and guerdons rich,
More than all earthly peoples could bestow,
From men and matrons in their companies.
Then,⁽⁸⁵⁸⁾ prithee, set no bloody forge of death
Within my borders. Poison not young breasts
With the strong wine of hatred ; plant in them

No filch'd hearts of fighting-cocks,⁽⁸⁶¹⁾ to raise
 The savagery of intestine strife
 Among my townsmen. Let him have no stint
 Of war abroad, in whom the fell desire
 For fame shall grow, but ah ! avaunt the fray
 Of home-bred birds. These boons are thine to
 take

Now, at my hands ; and ye shall have your part
 In this God-loving⁽⁸⁶⁹⁾ land, with fair exchange
 Of favour, gracing us and amply graced.

Chorus.

Woe ! Woe ! that we must wander,
 Hell's only shame and slander,
 We, outcast heirs of distant eld,
 Doomed by yon gods to cower
 Before their craft and power,
 From olden pride of place expelled !
 Oh sore the anguish, Mother Night !
 Fury we breathe and utter spite ;
 List to our rage, defend our right !

Athen. I will bespeak thee still in charity.

Thou shalt not say that I, a younger child
 Of Heaven, or these citizens of earth,
 Turned thee a graceless vagrant from our soil.
 Wherefore, if holy Suasion⁽⁸⁸⁶⁾ is for thee
 A name of awe, and my soft tongue hath power
 To stay thee, bide ; but hadst thou liefer go,
 'Twere sheer injustice to annoy my burgh
 With wrath and malice ruining the host,
 Since thou may'st have thy meed of dignity,
 Thine equitable portion in our land.

Chor. Say, queen Athena, what abode is ours ?

Athen. Trust me, 'tis no distressful dwelling-place.

Chor. What honour waits me here, if I consent ?

Athen. Without thy blessing not a house shall thrive.

Chor. Wilt thou possess me of such influence ?

Athen. Yes, I will prosper all thy worshippers.

Chor. And shall thy pledge endure eternally ?

Athen. I will not plight my word to make it void.

Chor. Methinks thou movest me ; my wrath relents.

Athen. So shalt thou win good friends and neighbourly.

Chor. What prayers wilt have me utter for the land ?

Athen. Pray for the victory that hath no gall,

Blessing from earth and from the ocean dew
And from the sky above. Pray that the winds
May blow upon our plain with breath serene,
The lively affluent increase of the fields
And flocks ne'er fail this city, and the seed
Of human kind be spared. Uproot alone
The wicked from among us. For I love,
E'en as a husbandman his fruit, the stock
Of this my righteous⁽⁹¹²⁾ folk and innocent.
Such be thy part, and I will promise fame
Unto my town before the world, and haste
To crown her in the splendid lists of war.

Chorus.

We will dwell in loyal
League with Pallas' town.
From great Zeus the royal
City holds her crown.
Yea, the gods empower
Athens and she reigns,

Ares' pride, the tower
 Guarding Hellas' fanes.⁽⁹²⁰⁾
 May the earth for thee outpour,
 'Neath the sun's caressing,
 All her riches evermore,
 Waft thee all her blessing.

ATHENA.

Mark ye what bounty I invoke
 Full gladly, O my folk,
 From your unearthly inmates, strong
 And jealous ; to their watch belong
 Your lives. The careless man, whose lot
 Was light, is smit and knoweth not
 Whence falls the hasty stroke,
 Whene'er unrighteous deeds of yore⁽⁹³⁵⁾
 Bring these fierce judges to his door,
 And noiseless vengeful death
 Stifles his haughty breath.

Chorus.

Parching drought, while we bestead,
 Spare thy leafy places,
 Suffer thy young vines to spread
 Through the orchard spaces.⁽⁹⁴¹⁾
 May no murrain o'er thy plain
 Cast its heavy shadow ;
 Twinning ewes their nurture drain
 From thine every meadow.⁽⁹⁴⁴⁾
 May the rock for thee beteem
 All its precious burden ;⁽⁹⁴⁷⁾
 And our godsend thou esteem
 Worth full many a guerdon.

ATHENA.

Hear ye, my city's ancient guard,
What boons Erinyes doth award,
That power dread
Among the deathless and the dead.
Full plain her potency is signed
Upon the lives of mortal kind ;
One she attunes to song, and blears
Another with sad tears.

Chorus.

Blighting death no more, for ruth,
Manhood's spring deflower ;
Maidens in their lovely youth
Haste with love to dower,
Gods ⁽⁹⁶⁰⁾ and Fates, whose perfect law
Orders every dwelling,
Sisters stern, engirt with awe,
Justice aye compelling.

ATHENA.

Welcome your love, who freely grant
To my dear land your covenant ;
And blest be Suasion, whose sooth look
Controlled my lips and tongue, and shook
Grim hearts that turned askant.
O willing captives and devote
To Zeus, the guardian of the mote,⁽⁹⁷³⁾
Victors for ever, ye and I
In rivalry of grace will vie.

Chorus.

Ne'er may raving Faction seek
 Your heart's blood for fuel,
 Never work her deadly wreake
 Here in civic duel.
 May thy folk in love be one,
 Be they one in hating ; ⁽⁹⁸⁶⁾
 Peace be all their benison,
 Every ill abating.

ATHENA.

Behold, their chastened tongues have hit
 The gracious path of benefit ;
 Grim visages, beneath whose spell
 Wealth in my city's lap shall swell :
 If still with righteous mind
 Ye pay their kindness ⁽⁹⁹²⁾ in your kind,
 An upright polity as well
 Shall blazon and proclaim
 Mine Athens and the Attic name.

Chorus.

Fare ye well, O friends, enjoy
 Wealth and weal without alloy,
 Citizens enthroned as kings,
 Nigh to Zeus, 'neath Pallas' wings, ⁽⁹⁹³⁾
 Dear to him, for ye are hers.
 He regards her worshippers,
 Chastened, as your queen is chaste,
 Lovers by her favour graced.

ATHENA.

Farewell I bid ye and command
The lights to beam, the blood to pour,
And women ⁽¹⁰⁰⁴⁾ in their radiant band
To ope with me your cavern door
In holy pride and pomp. Away !
Withhold all bane, I pray,
Send for our friendly tryst
Glory eterne and grist.
Show, sons of Cranaus, ⁽¹⁰¹¹⁾ the road
To our strange citizens' abode,
And be your city's heart
Boon for their bounteous part.

Chorus.

Joy we offer, yea, recall
Joy upon your town for all,
Men and heroes, who maintain
Pallas' burgh without a stain.
For your duty we will give
Joy and welfare, while ye live,
That ye never shall repent
This our kindly settlement.

Athen. Your words of intercession I acclaim,
And now amid the torches' ruddy glare, ⁽¹⁰²²⁾
I give you escort to your nether place ⁽¹⁰²³⁾
In earth's retreat ⁽¹⁰²³⁾ with trusty ministrants,
The dames who keep my image. ⁽¹⁰²⁴⁾ For the face
Of Theseus' land will brighten, ⁽¹⁰²⁵⁾ as the troop
Goes by in glory, maids and matrons all
And priestly women marching in their robes

Of festal purple.⁽¹⁰²⁸⁾ Raise your laud, and
launch

The splendour of your fire, that all the land
May see henceforth their gracious presence
traced

Bright in the fortunes of a prosperous folk.

Attendants.

Fare homeward, ye weird children of the Night,
Mighty and jealous spirits, go

(Countrymen, peace !)

In joyful train, 'mid holy fire and light,
To yon hoar⁽¹⁰³⁷⁾ cave in earth below.

(Peace, all ye people !⁽¹⁰³⁸⁾)

Only in pity

Visit our city,

Blessing and blest ;

Torches are glowing,

Honey is flowing ;

On to your rest !

(Ololeu ! Sing ololeu !)

Fate goes before thee,

Zeus watches o'er thee,

Pallas is thine ;

Listed in triple

League with thy people,

City divine !

(Ololeu ! Sing ololeu !)

METRICAL VERSIONS

HYMN TO ZEUS

(*Agam.* 160-183)

ZEUS, our surest aid and best,
Howsoe'er thou art addressed,
 Thee, the only name and power,
By thy simple name we hail,
 Now the deadly shadows lower,
And our spirits faint and fail.

Man with wisdom is endowed,
When his soul to Zeus hath bowed ;
 For the former Lord is reckoned
As of naught and overpast,
 And a Mightier threw the second
Vaunting champion at the last.

Knowledge cometh of our pain ;
So His wisdom doth ordain.
 For the heart in nightly travail
Tells its tears ; the Gods above,
 Strong to guide, our path unravel
By compelling whom they love.

THE SACRIFICE OF IPHIGENEIA

(Agam. 227-248)

NAUGHT did any warlike elder
Of the maiden's pleading reck :
Like a kid the henchmen held her
High uplifted, at his beck.

Then they prayed, and on the altar,
Closely swathed, his victim hung,
And her voice no more might falter :
"Spare me, father, I am young."

But the saffron liv'ry fluttered
Downward from her drooping head,
And her wistful visage uttered,
Like a picture, words unsaid.

For those piteous eyes complaining
Smote the butchers, each in turn,
Though her lips in vain were straining
Their relentless gags to spurn ;

Lovely lips and pure—that vestal
Voice, amid the homely choir,
Oft had sung, to swell the festal
Chant of blessing for her sire.

Ah ! his cruel heart misgave him,
And he feared her dying breath,
Lest the voice that prayed to save him
Change and curse him unto death !

AGAMEMNON

FIRST STASIMON

(367-474).

WELL they aver, 'twas Zeus who struck ;
No secret here to thread !
E'en as he ordered, so their luck
Was meted. One hath said,
" Your gods concern them not, nor frown,
Though sinners violate the crown
Of holy usage." Impious tongue !
Behold from men the truth is wrung,
Children of houses, which of old
Breathed rank rebellion, overbold
And swollen with surcharge
Of wealth and power all too large.
Be thine the sheltered way, the meed
Of wisdom, which is wealth indeed.
For riches are a vain defence
Unto the worldling's insolence,
Who dares the mighty seat of Justice thrust
Beneath his feet in dust.

He may not break the Tempter's spell,
Her witchery of might,
When, kindled by that imp of Hell,
Red ruin is alight.
Himself, discovered like the grain
Of mottled bronze, betrays the stain

Deep in his blackened heart—the boy,
Chasing his wingèd toy,
Whose guilt upon his town shall press
In deadly dole and bitterness.
Vainly he sues at Heaven's door ;
God hears him nevermore,
But to perdition sends astray
The fool upon his wicked way.
So Paris came ; e'en such his soul,
Who from Atrides' mansion stole
A wife, and shamed the table of her lord
By treachery abhorred.
Dowered with death, the wanton fiend
Swift through the gate was gone.
And hark ! the vengeful town unqueened
Doth menace Ilion,
With trooping sea-dogs all astir,
And shield and spear that clash for her ;
While voices weird anent the king
From home to home are oracling :
“ Alack the house ! Alack the bed,
Which love imprinted ere it fled !
Lone in his seat, of voice forlorn,
Returning not her scorn
Whom his heart follows far o'er sea,
'Tis but a wraith of royalty,
Who rules yon halls. Her statues' grace
Is loathèd now ; the vacant face,
Where Aphrodite seemed erewhile to bask,
Stares like a sightless mask.

And mournful joys, to mock his grief,
Enchant the lonely night

In vain with comfort cold and brief.

In vain ! The fair delight,
A moment seen in fond surmise,
Flits from his hands and from his eyes
Upon the twilight path of sleep.”—
Our houses too have woes to weep
And larger trouble to rehearse,
A very universe
Of sore heartbreaking for the host,
Who fared from every Grecian coast
Together, and have left a smart
In every home and every heart.
They come, the wights remembered well,
And naught have we who sent to tell ;
For naught of all we loved returns
Save manhood mouldering in urns.

The war-god, who delights to hold
His scale mid hurtling spears,
Refines the dust, that is not gold,
For blood and costly tears,
And sends from Ilion a load
Of heaviness full lightly stowed.
The miserable clay is pent
Within its last environment ;
And now they mourn a warrior tried,
Now cry upon the accursèd bride :
“ Woe worth the hour his life was spilt
To wash away her guilt ! ”
Such fretful murmurs wax unknown ;
An angrier, a louder moan
Gathers on Atreus’ sons who led ;
And they, the undisfigured dead,

Lie fielded still around the Trojan wall,
And lords but of their earthy pall.

A shadow, as of dire mischance,
Hath overta'en my thought.
The sullen burghers' sufferance
Goes up with curses fraught.
I trow, God keeps within His ken
High-handed murderers of men.
Who runs awhile, too swift, too strong,
Upon the road of wrong,
There follow low'ring on his track
The sprites of wrath, to hale him back ;
His lustre darkens in the grave ;
He sinks, with none to save.
For eyes divine with envy blaze,
That strikes the man, whom men o'erpraise.
Be mine the comfortable lot
Of bliss, which Heaven grudges not.
I would not waste the towns of stranger folk,
Nor dwell with downcast eyes beneath their
yoke.

AGAMEMNON

SECOND STASIMON

(681-781)

WHO named her? What weird tongue unseen fore-
stalled

Their doom with deft surmise?
Helen! The spear-won wife,
The hell of towns and ships and men at strife,
From her rich canopies
She sailed with giant Zephyr, when he called;
And mailed huntsmen in the rowers' wake,
Through Simois' forest sighed
Above the beached galley, plied
The murderous quarrel for her sake.

The wrath of Zeus in sufferance was pent
Till Ilion's daughter, kin
To death, in Heaven's time
Haled her new brethren, whose loud bridal chime
Attainted them of sin
'Gainst hearth and home, unto their punishment.
So Priam's ancient burgh, in other strain
And dirgeful, last and first,
On Paris cries, the bridegroom curst,
For those her children's blood and bitter pain.

As a lion's whelp she hath been,
A child of the house for a day,
Whom a man adventures to wean,
And 'tis tame and gentle at play,
The pet, while a summer runs,
Of the old and the little ones,
As it fawns with a hungry mien.

But the lion's heart doth rouse,
And 'tis quick to return his care
With a fierce and free carouse ;
For never a knave will dare
To prevent the gory feast,
Or deliver his sheep from the priest
Whom the fool would hire and house.

That presence softly brooding, for an hour,
Seemed to the town a trance
As of the waves at rest,
A jewel smiling fair on Ilion's breast,
A gently darted glance
Of love, that bourgeoned into poignant flower.
But love with death consorting, joys with fears,
On Priam's house she trod,
To venge the hospitable God,
A Fury fed with widows' tears.

My mind mislikes the ancient sage's tale,
That fortune, fully grown,
Begets a progeny
And dies not childless ; for good luck, they cry,
Hath issue of its own
And heritage of rank increasing bale.

Not so ! It is the pregnant deed of wrong
That yields an aftergrowth
Of kindred wickedness ; the house that doth
Aright hath children ever fair and strong.

For Violence, as a seed which was sown of old,
A creature doth surely breed, who is young and bold.
And she waxeth in woe upon men in the day of doom ;
For the new-born beareth again, and the fruit of her
womb

Is Lust and Defiance, a fiend who is stronger than man,
A demon whom men cannot bind nor Heaven shall ban.
And the dwelling accurst is afraid of the deadly twins,
For their visage is dark with the shade of the primal sins.
But Justice abideth bright in the smoky cot,
In the righteous is her delight, with the just her lot,
And she holdeth her eyes aloof from the smirch'd guilt,
From the pride of the sinner's roof, that his hands have
built.

She disdaineth the power and praise that is miscreate.
With the just is her home, and her ways are the ways
of Fate.

THE DEATH OF AGAMEMNON

(*Agam.* 1489-1496)

OH my liege, in vain our crying !
Loyal hearts their speech forget,
While thou liest foully dying,
Writhing in that spider's net—

Bed of shame ! Disgraceful prison !—
Liest there, a king unmade,
Where the crafty hands of Treason
Smote thee with its cruel blade.

AT THE TOMB OF AGAMEMNON

(Choeph. 152-164)

TEARS for our master,
Pious oblation,
Perishing tears for a perished lord !
They shall outlast her
Idle libation,
Guiltily offered for guilt abhorred.
Tears ! let the gentle shower beat
On this thy last forlorn retreat.
Spirit of power,
Wake in thy giant
Might as a war-god, strong to save !
Wake in this hour,
Handsel thy pliant
Scythian bow or thy trenchant glaive !
Worshipful champion, from the gloom
Of thy sad heart give heed, and come !

COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

AGAMEMNON

Prologue, 1-39

THE painted or 'shaded' background represented in this and the next play the front of the royal palace at Argos, in the last play the shrines of the Delphic Apollo and Athena Polias; the locality was indicated, without change of the 'scenery,' by means of altars (*Agam.* 513) and statues (*Agam.* 520, 1081; *Eumen.* 235), and the introduction of the tomb in the *Choephoroe*. There were two (or possibly three) doors; one on the spectator's left was supposed to lead to the hall (*megaron*) of the palace, another on the right to the women's apartments (*Choeph.* 878). The left *parodos* (side-passage) was for persons coming from abroad, those coming from the town entered from the right. On a platform representing the roof of the palace the watchman appears. The time is night. The watchman's soliloquy constitutes the prologue, or first scene preceding the entrance of the Chorus.

¹ The watch had been kept from the beginning of the tenth year of the siege, as Calchas had predicted the capture of Troy in that year (*Il.* ii. 329; *Od.* iv. 526). To the ignorant watchman it is nothing more than a troublesome woman's whim (11). ³ Lit. 'couched in the roof's embrace'; so Dr. Verrall explains this

grotesque phrase. The received rendering, 'leaning head on arm,' is very doubtful. ⁷ The great constellations are said to 'bring' the seasons marked by their rise or setting. ⁸ The succession of signals is compared to the military watchword ('symbol') passed along the line. ¹⁵ He is kept awake by the threat of death as the penalty for falling asleep at his post. ¹⁷ A homely metaphor from simples, cf. *Choeph.* 359. ²³ The beacon-fire on mount Arachnae (in the direction of Epidaurus) is now supposed to be seen. ²⁴ Aeschylus makes Argos, the Dorian capital, the city of Agamemnon, against the Homeric tradition, to which Sophocles adhered (*Elect.* 9), that he "ruled from Mycenae over all Argos (the country) and many islands" (*Il.* ii. 101). Cf. *Choeph.* 4. It was now convenient to forget the name of Mycenae, as it had been ruthlessly destroyed ten years before this (B.C. 468) by the Argives, with whom the Athenians were on friendly terms (*Eumen.* 762 ff.) ²⁹ The verb (from *orthros*, 'dawn') implies that the early morning is in itself auspicious for the women's chant. ³³ The Greeks played with three dice; the best throw ('Aphrodite') was when all three fell with the 6 uppermost, the worst ('the dog') when all showed the figure 1. Cf. *Choeph.* 967. The vulgar metaphors here and l. 36 are characteristic of the speaker, like his rough humour (3, 31). Though merely a house-servant he is loyally devoted to his master. His speech in its tone of surly discontent (11) and its innuendos reflects the hatred and suspicion surrounding the queen. ³⁶ Theognis employs the same metaphor, signifying an enforced and stubborn silence: "An ox stamping on my tongue with heavy foot checks my prating, albeit I know." The

proverb may have been suggested by an ox trampling a snake under foot. This beast, however, was an emblem of silence ; cf. Alciphron : " Not though an ox were to speak to me, as the saying is." The Spartans appear to have applied the same idea in their ritual. " They sacrificed an ox to Ares after a victory gained by artifice, and the noisy cock when victorious by force " (Plutarch, *Instt. Lac.* 25, cited by J. F. Davies). The corresponding polite metaphor is that of a key or a seal on the tongue, e.g. Sophocles, *Oed. Col.* 1052.

Parodus, 40-257

The prologue is followed by a *parodus*, commenced by the Leader chanting with the Chorus in procession. The term (properly denoting the 'entrance' chant in anapaestic measure) was applied to 'the first song of the whole chorus,' as Aristotle defines it (*Poet.* 12). The interval between night and day is now supposed to have passed.

⁴¹ The legal terms imply that Agamemnon had a divine commission to punish Priam ; cf. 449, 744, and the judicial language, 534 ff. ⁴³ Cf. 109. The brothers were closely united as having inherited the neighbouring thrones of Argos (or Mycenae) and Sparta, and by their common marriage connection (their wives being both daughters of Leda), which bound Agamemnon to undertake the war for the recovery of Helen. Professor Lewis Campbell argues that, as the poet is silent concerning Sparta as well as Mycenae, the words here and l. 400 should be taken literally as meaning that the brothers ruled jointly at Argos and kept house together. But such a contradiction of the

Epic story is hardly likely. Stesichorus and Pindar made Amyclae Agamemnon's city; his tomb and that of Cassandra were shown there.⁵² A metaphor familiar in English poetry: *e.g.* Southey describes a bird as 'oaring with slow wing her upward way.'⁵⁷ The Greek word may mean only 'joint tenants of the sky,' or 'emigrants,' but to an Athenian audience it would rather denote settlers in a foreign city; cf. *Eumen.* 1011, where the reconciled Furies are so described as strangers domiciled at Athens. The birds of the air are regarded as settlers in the city of Zeus (the sky). Aristophanes in the *Birds* reverses the picture, making them build a city for themselves in the sky so as to intercept the offerings from the earth. As the domiciled foreigners had their 'patrons' among the citizens, so the birds are entitled to protection from their patron, Zeus (56). Apollo is their guardian as the god of augury (interpreting the signs sent from Zeus by the birds), Pan as a rustic god. The latter had recently been installed at Athens out of gratitude for his aid in routing the Persians at Marathon (Pausan. i. 28); a sudden 'panic' in battle was ascribed to the 'Aegipans.'⁵⁹ 'Erinyes' here reverts to its earlier sense, the personified curse—the malison which protects the humblest. According to a Greek proverb, "even dogs have their Erinyes."⁶¹ Paris.⁶⁵ The word denotes especially the sacrifice before marriage. It is applied here to the combat as part of Helen's bridal-rite, and still more boldly to the launching of the ships (226) for her recovery. Euripides (*Iphig. in Aul.* 723) has a similar but less obscure play on the word in the scene at Aulis, where Clytemnestra asks Agamemnon: "Hast thou already made the sacrifice *for* the maiden

to the goddess (Hera)?” He replies that he is just setting about it (the sacrifice *of* the maiden to Artemis). Cf. Vergil, *Æn.* viii. 18. ⁷⁰ Another rendering is ‘the vengeance of the fireless rites,’ *i.e.* those of the Furies, who need no sacrificial fire, but consume the victim with their own breath [L. Campbell]. With an emendation [Casaubon] in l. 69 the sense is: “He (Paris) shall not coax the angry, reluctant sacrifice that will not burn, though he stirs the embers and pours oil beneath”; that is, the gods refuse his sacrifice. ⁷⁴ The Chorus apparently constitute the ‘Council,’ which is mentioned l. 884. ⁸⁰ An allusion to the riddle of the Sphinx, which is quoted by Athenaeus from Asclepiades (circ. B.C. 349) in the following form: “There is a thing on earth having one voice, but ’tis two-footed and four-footed and three-footed in turn; changeful like none other that walketh the earth or goeth in the air or on the sea; when the feet that support it are most in number, then hath it least agility.” That this enigma had come down with the Sphinx legend from the Epic period appears from Hesiod, *Works*, 531, where a beast going on three legs is likened to a ‘man on three feet.’ The solution is given by a scholiast in some verses of uncertain date: “’Tis Man, born a babe on four feet, leaning in old age on a staff, that is, a third foot.” ⁸³ The handmaids now appear, and altars are perhaps kindled in front of the palace. The queen has sent materials everywhere from the royal closet, oil and incense and costly Oriental unguents, to make a great display of rejoicing. ⁹⁰ Zeus (*Eumen.* 973) and Hermes presided over the ‘agora,’ the centre of the city-life. ⁹⁴ The poet, an Eleusinian, lavishes

his gorgeous imagery in ornate descriptions of ritual (cf. *Pers.* 611 ff.). ⁹⁶ The word (*pelanos*) is also used of offerings in which oil was the chief ingredient, combined with honey or milk : cf. *Choeph.* 150. Oil had a peculiarly sacred office, as in the service of the Temple at Jerusalem (*Levit.* ii.) and in the earlier Hebrew ritual (*Gen.* xxxv. 14). ¹⁰⁷ Mr. E. D. A. Morshead suggests a different interpretation : "Still upon me doth the divine life, whose strength waxes never old, breathe from heaven the impulse of song." See the preface to his admirable translation of the Trilogy, entitled 'The House of Atreus.' ¹¹⁶ An augural term : the birds were seen on a rock on the right (spear-hand). The omen was confirmed by the coincidence that two appeared together, bent on the same quest, though of different breed. The black eagle was renowned for strength, and is called in Homer "the hunter, strongest at once and swiftest of all fowls"; the 'white-tailed' is described by Aristotle as the largest kind. The incident which the poet imagines is depicted on a Sicilian coin, symbolising a victory (see the illustration). Tacitus (*Hist.* i. 62) records a real case. ¹²¹ A refrain of Semitic origin (Hebr. *helil-na*, 'weep'). It was associated with passionate wailing, though the 'Linos' song named from it was sung at the harvest-home (*Il.* xviii 570) and at feasts. ¹²² Vulg. 'twain and diverse in temper'; this is explained by the contrast between the imperious Agamemnon and Menelaus, who says of himself (*Il.* xxiii. 612), "my heart was never overweening nor obdurate." ¹⁴⁰ Artemis was worshipped under this title (*Pausan.* viii 35, 8). As a huntress she was jealous for her own preserves ; as the moon-

goddess, concerned with birth and nurture, she protected all young life. Sophocles, but not Aeschylus, makes use of the story that Agamemnon offended her by killing a doe within her sacred precinct. As a champion of Troy, like Apollo her brother, she sought to stop the Greek expedition.¹⁵¹ Through the twofold meaning of the Greek word, the horror of the sacrifice is brought out in epithets contrasting it with the domestic banquet, at which the family met in love. It is unsanctioned; none may partake of it (*i.e.* of the remainder of the sacrificial offerings); it breeds feud (not love) and infidelity.¹⁵⁵ First the 'Thyestean feast' (1242), then the slaughter of Iphigeneia. Agamemnon was driven by Até to repeat the very act of his father; the blood of his daughter was the atonement required by the Erinyes haunting the house (1186) for the blood of the other children.¹⁶⁵ There was a fear of misnaming the gods: cf. Plato, *Crat.* 400 E. ¹⁷¹ Three falls gave the victory in wrestling. ¹⁷⁹ Cf. 250. The poet gives a deeper spiritual meaning to the old adage, 'a fool is taught by experience,' which came down through Homer and Hesiod (*Works*, 218). ¹⁸⁰ The metaphor is probably from a bleeding wound rather than from tears, as rendered in the metrical translation. A similar conception of the divine influence is expressed by Cleanthes, the Stoic (transl. by Archdeacon Cheetham):

" O Zeus and Destiny, may I be led
By you along the way that I should tread:
I follow quick; but if with recreant will
I fain would linger, I must follow still."

¹⁹⁰ The narrowest part of the Euripus (Negroponte) opposite Chalcis in Euboea, where the surge was

mistaken for a tide recurring seven times in the day !
¹⁹³ The wind from this region of the northern Aegean was called 'Strymonian'; it would hinder the Greek ships in their northward voyage. Cf. 654. ²⁰² So Achilles in anger throws his sceptre on the ground, *Il.* i. 245. ²²⁸ Lit. 'life,' but cf. Hom. *Hymn to Hermes*, 42, where the god 'pierces out the life of a tortoise,' *i.e.* severs the life-breath in the throat (cf. *ibid.* 119). ²³⁹ A saffron robe (*krokôtos*) was part of a woman's finery (cf. Eurip. *Phoen.* 1491). It is a pathetic reminder of the home, whence the maiden had been torn. The legend is taken for granted, viz. that she was brought to Aulis on the pretext of betrothing her to Achilles. Lucretius (i. 80 ff.), following Euripides (*Iphig. in Aul.*), marks the contrast between the impious rite and the marriage ceremonies which were denied to her. For him the crime was a warning against priestly 'religion'; for Dante (*Paradiso*, 5) a warning against rash oaths, having its parallel in Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter. ²⁴¹ The painter Timanthes, whose presentation of this scene was famous, laid stress on the father's grief: Agamemnon stood apart with his head covered (Pliny, *N. H.* 35, 10), as in Eurip. l. c. 1550. This is imitated in a relief on a vase in the Uffizi palace at Florence bearing the name of Cleomenes, and in a Pompeian wall-painting preserved in the Museo Borbonico, Naples. [See illustration.] The picture may well have been inspired by Euripides. It assumes, as he does, the miraculous rescue by means of a fawn. Timanthes, of Cythnus and Sicyon, was one of the earliest successors of Zeuxis, by whose genius Greek painting was brought to its maturity. Aeschylus'

‘picture’ is imaginary ; but he frequently shows his appreciation of painting and sculpture (418, 801, 1329, *Eumen.* 50, 294). ²⁴⁶ Cf. 146. The paean in its primitive form was probably a medical incantation addressed to the old god of healing, Paieon (*Il.* v. 401), the word itself being the refrain, ‘O Healer!’ (cf. *Soph. Philoct.* 168). As the Bacchic cry *euoi* (meaning unknown) was translated into a name of the god (Euōios), so the Healer was called *ieōos* or, with loss of iota, *eōos* and *Iepaieon*, and the latter word sometimes denoted the chant, like *paian*. But when Apollo superseded the earlier god (taking even his title *eōos*, *Il.* xv. 356), the chant was developed into a song of victory (*Il.* xxii. 394) and ultimately into a hymn of praise or thanksgiving, not always addressed to Apollo. Here the paean belongs to Zeus as guardian or ‘saviour’ of the house, and the poet supposes it to have been sung at domestic banquets by the king’s young daughter, as it might have been in the patriarchal age of Greece, to accompany the last libation. Three libations were poured after that to the ‘good genius,’ which closed the meal : the first to the Olympian gods, the second to the heroes, the third (cf. *Choeph.* 245) to Zeus. ²⁵⁶ According to Argive tradition (*Aesch. Suppl.* 260 ff.) the Peloponnese was called Apia from a King Apis, the son of Phoroneus. The name is explained by E. Curtius as meaning ‘water-girt’ ; cf. Messapia, ‘the land between the waters.’

First Episode, 258–354.

²⁶⁵ True to her name (*euphrone*, ‘kindness’).

²⁷⁴ Zeus might have sent a delusive dream to her, as

to Agamemnon (*Il.* ii. 6). ²⁷⁶ Vague, idle ; the reverse of the Homeric 'winged words,' as Aeschylus understood the phrase. ²⁸² The word (of Persian origin, cf. *S. Matth.* v. 41) denoted properly a Persian mounted postman. Herodotus (viii. 98) conversely compares the Persian courier-post to the Greek torch-race : the riders being posted at intervals of a day's journey on horseback, "the first delivers the message to the second, the second to the third, and so it is passed on." The poet's idea may have been suggested by the fact (*Herod.* ix. 3) that Mardonius proposed, when he took possession of Athens, to announce the event to Xerxes at Sardis by fire-signals from island to island. ²⁸³ It is called by Sophocles a 'headland of the deep' : there is such a projecting bluff on the eastern coast of the island, from which a beacon on Ida would be just visible, the distance being about 70 miles. It was said that the sun setting behind Mt. Athos, which rises nearly 7000 feet above the sea, cast the shadow of the peak on the back of a certain bronze ox in Lemnus, a distance of about 50 miles. ²⁸⁹ A mountain of Euboea ; its situation is not certain, but Athos is 90 miles from the nearest point of the island ! A bonfire lighted on the Malvern hills in 1856 was visible from a hill near Aylesbury, 70 miles off (Paley). ²⁹³ On the Boeotian side of the Euripus overlooking Anthedon, near which was the home of the sea-god Glaucus. From this height the beacon-fire passes southward over Thebes to Mt. Cithaeron and thence, skirting a bay of the Corinthian gulf ('Gorgopis'), to the promontory Aegiplanctus ; then it traverses the isthmus and the intervening headlands

of the Saronic gulf to Mt. Arachnae in Argolis, about 20 miles east of Argos. (See C. S. Merriam, *Classical Rev.* v.) ³¹² The nocturnal torch-race, to which the succession of beacon-fires is likened, was familiar in Greece and especially at Athens, where it was held in honour of Athena and Hephaestus, as patrons of mechanical art, and of Prometheus; the torches were kindled at an altar common to the two gods. Pausanias (i. 30) refers to the race as one between individual runners. But the older contest was that in which the torch was handed on from one to another of several runners stationed at intervals; the competition was between bands of young athletes representing the different tribes and regularly trained at the expense of the gymnasiarchs. [See the illustration, which represents a victorious squad headed by two elderly officials; the foremost (the trainer?) holds the torch and makes an offering to the goddess Bendis, the Thracian Artemis, in whose honour the race has been held.] In each line of runners the torch was carried by the first till he was overtaken by the second and fell out; the second gave it up to the third and so on, till the last of one set arrived at the goal and received the prize for his tribe from the Archon Basileus. At Olympia a short race was run with torches to an altar on which wood was to be lighted; the priest standing by gave a crown to the runner who was first to touch it with his torch. Hence it is conjectured that the race had its origin in some religious usage, probably the renewal of the sacred altar-fire, in which swiftness was essential, when the fire had to be conveyed from a distance, in order to preserve its purity.

Thus, when the Plataeans, after the repulse of the Persian invasion, put out the fire in their temples as having been polluted, and sent to Delphi for fresh fire, a citizen deputed for the purpose is said to have brought it running with such speed that he fell dead (Plutarch, *Aristeides*, ch. 20). Mr. J. G. Frazer supposes that the idea was that of scattering light on the earth to fertilise it. ³¹⁴ Lit. 'the victor is he who ran first and last,' *i.e.* the fire-god, who carried the torch himself unaided from beginning to end. This explanation [L. Campbell] is probable, though Hephæstus is described at the outset rather as the 'starter' of the race. ³¹⁶ For the watchman the signal was a 'symbol' in the military sense; for Clytemnestra it was a 'symbol' arranged between Agamemnon and herself: that is, he had sent her the message by agreement on the night of the victory. (Cf. note on l. 898.) But how are we to explain his arrival so soon afterwards? (279). Suppose that he started early in the day, leaving instructions for the bonfires to be lighted at nightfall, the long voyage from Troy and the shipwreck are crowded into twenty-four hours at the most. According to Verrall, we are to understand that the queen had secret information some days before, that Troy had fallen and the king was on his way home, her pretended fire-message being merely a ruse improvised to put off and bewilder the loyal elders. But such complications are not in keeping with the simplicity of a Greek tragedy, and the slight hints of a plot within the Council which he discovers (*e.g.* 352) would not have sufficed to give the audience the requisite clue. Cf. 890. ³³² The soldiers are breakfasting in the

houses at hap-hazard, not in the orderly fashion or the meals in camp (*Il.* xi. 730, "we took supper in ranks throughout the camp"). The Greek phrase suggests a contrast with a public entertainment, when the citizens were entertained in the streets, as at the Apaturia, or with a distribution of meat after a great public sacrifice, as at the Athenian Panathenaea, when the citizens were assembled for the purpose according to their demes (see C. T. Newton, 'Essays on Archaeology,' p. 173 f.). Clytemnestra's eager imagination betrays the secret hope that the army will rush into those excesses, of which the herald coarsely boasts (526). Even in the Homeric age these were believed to bring disaster; see *Od.* iii. 150 f. The sentiment is fully developed in the post-Homeric legend regarding the fate of the Locrian Ajax, which was part of the *Iliupersis*: he was killed by the lightning-bolt of Athena as a punishment for dragging Cassandra from her altar, and his sin was visited even on his people, the Locrians, in pestilence. This story is assumed in the present drama, where Agamemnon brings back Cassandra among his captives. The storm presently described is that in which Ajax perished.

³⁴⁴ The voyage to and from Troy is compared to the double course (*diaulos*), in which the racers turned the goal (*nussa*) and ran back to the starting-place (*aphesis*).

³⁴⁶ In these boding words Clytemnestra speaks to her hearers of the dead who had fallen on the Greek side, to herself of her murdered child.

³⁵² Verrall assigns this speech with 501 f. to a partisan of the queen pretending acquiescence (the tone being markedly at variance with that of the Chorus, 483 ff.), and the lines which follow to a body of conspirators among the Elders. Cf. 1344.

First Stasimon, 355-487.

This term (properly a 'stationary' song, as distinct from the 'entrance' chant) denoted the regular choral ode intervening between two episodes or 'acts.' The ode is introduced by a short anapaestic passage (355-66) and followed by an epode (475-87), which leads back to the action: Wecklein regards this as a dialogue between two of the Elders. ³⁶⁴ Amplified after the poet's fashion from a simple proverbial expression, 'to shoot sky-high,' of wasted effort. ³⁸⁵ The sinner is blinded insensibly by a lying spirit, the offspring of his infatuation (Até). ³⁹³ Another proverbial phrase, found also in Plato, for wasted labour or vanity. ⁴⁰⁰ The plural is conventional and does not imply a joint household; the loneliness of Menelaus, sitting apart in stony grief (412), rather suggests the contrary. ⁴⁰⁹ Here and l. 1099 ('we seek no prophet,' to tell the story of the house) the word denotes those through whom the house speaks, its confidential advisers and remembrancers. The Elders themselves claim something of this authority or inspiration (107). The poet provides this somewhat indefinite substitute for the minstrel who, in the Homeric story (*Od.* iii. 267), was left in charge of the house. ⁴²⁰ Visions which come to mourn with him; cf. Tennyson, 'In Memoriam,' lxviii. ⁴³⁷ The war-god is likened to a gold-merchant. He holds the scale, not over the counter but in the battle-field; he takes good bodies and gives in exchange to the kinsmen not gold-dust but dust from the pyre, which weighs light in the hands but heavily on the heart. ⁴⁵⁵ The corpses which are not burnt and sent home

in urns are interred in the hostile land. Burial and cremation were both known at Athens; the former had prevailed as late as B.C. 700, and was again, though less commonly, practised. That Agamemnon's body was buried is proved by Clytemnestra's language (872) and the mutilation (*Choeph.* 439). Cf. *Septem c. Theb.* 949. In the Homeric picture the tomb is merely the earthen barrow built on the spot, wherein the urn is deposited. ⁴⁷⁰ This is the notion of the 'evil eye' in another form; cf. 947.

Second Episode, 488-680.

⁴⁹⁴ They infer that Agamemnon's ship has arrived; the ship itself would be crowned with olive as well as the messenger, in token of gratitude for the accomplishment of the voyage. Similarly a deputy (*theoros*), going to or returning from the Delphic oracle, wore a wreath of laurel (*e.g.* Fabius Pictor, Livy xxiii. 11). ⁴⁹⁵ Lit. 'the dry dust, sister of the bordering mud': Verrall suggests that this familiarly describes the plain between Argos and the sea, boggy on the western, and parched on the eastern side. Otherwise the dust may be that raised by Agamemnon's train approaching. ⁴⁹⁸ This word, which he presently utters, is itself the announcement of success. ⁵¹⁰ Apollo, worshipped in the Troad, was on the Trojan side (*Il.* i. 53), but he is now besought to befriend Argos, where his Dorian cult had its early home. The epithets describe the Dorian god in his beneficent character, 'saving' instead of destroying, 'healing' instead of plaguing. ⁵¹³ From *Suppl.* 228, where the scene is at Argos and the same three gods are worshipped at one altar, it

may be inferred that there was such a 'common altar' in front of the palace, to which the herald here turns.

⁵¹⁵ The herald's person was sacred from this association.

⁵¹⁹ The ancestral stone chairs (260) at the door of the palace, cf. *Od.* iii. 406. ⁵²⁰ There were images guarding the entrance (*propyla*) and facing eastwards. In *Soph. Elect.* (1375), Orestes, entering the palace, bows before them as the gods of his father. Here, as the herald comes up by the eastern road, they confront him with eyes responsive to the rising sun. ⁵⁴¹ He sheds tears as he speaks, kneeling on the ground.

⁵⁵⁵ The soldiers, when they were not on night duty, slept on board the ships, which were drawn up on shore in the naval camp protected by a rampart (*Il.* vii.), the beds being on the gangways. Only the chiefs had tents or 'huts.' ⁵⁶⁸ This ribald allusion to the listless dead, who 'will not even be at the trouble of rising up,' ominously recalls Clytemnestra's foreboding (346). ⁵⁷⁶ The chiefs now 'winging their way' over the seas with the Trojan trophies, which will be hung on the walls of Greek temples. ⁵⁹⁷ The incense was dropped on the fire so as to burn gradually.

⁶⁰⁹ Valuables were sealed up, cf. *Eurip. Orest.* 107 (of Helen), *Herod.* ii. 121. There is also a veiled allusion to the seal of chastity, which she had broken. ⁶¹² *Vulg.* 'I know as little of amours as of the dipping (tempering) of bronze,' not the dyeing of it, as there was no such process, the colour of bronze being varied only by means of gold or other alloy. ⁶¹⁵ The actor, perhaps, significantly touched his ears (the 'clear interpreters'). ⁶⁴² Ares is depicted as a warrior urging his chariot amid the carnage with a two-lashed whip (cf. *Choeph.* 374) and brandishing his two spears (the

ordinary number). The 'twofold' team, &c., suggests the havoc dealt on both sides together. ⁶⁴⁵ The poet's daring irony is felt in this phrase. The paean belonged least of all to these spirits of darkness and calamity. ⁶⁵⁰ *I.e.*, the lightning conspired with the sea; cf. Milton, *P.R.* iv. 412, 'water with fire in ruin reconciled.' ⁶⁶⁴ We may compare the Greek sculptor's conception of Victory winged and alighting on the prow of a ship (as in the Niké of Paeonius), a symbol of success in a naval battle. To such figures, rather than to any Oriental source, the angel's wings of Christian art may be traced.

Second Stasimon, 681-781.

The first theme of this ode (the sin of Helen) follows pertinently the herald's news of the disaster to Menelaus. ⁶⁸⁶ The poet regards her name (as though from *hel-*, 'to destroy') as prophetic and suggested by some god, like an oracle or a warning dream. Aias (Ajax) in Sophocles similarly dwells on the mournful import of his own name ('*aiai*' = 'alas!'). The interpretation is sometimes obvious (*e.g.*, Prometheus, Polyneices), cf. 1006 and *Choeph.* 951. 'Odysseus' (the name being connected with 'hate') is explained, *Od.* v. 340, as a premonition of the enmity of Zeus, and likewise as having been given in hatred or revenge by Autolycus, his grandfather (*ib.* xix. 407). It is an odd coincidence that the name of 'Helena' was given by sailors at a later time to the destructive fire-ball, mistaken for a baleful star and supposed to be chased away by the friendly lights ('St. Elmo's fire') playing harmlessly about the ship. The latter, appearing two

together, were identified with Castor and Pollux, Helen's brothers (Pliny, *N.H.* ii. 17), though according to the more orthodox view she herself was ranked with them as a guardian of ships (Eurip. *Orest.* 1654, 1707).⁶⁹² This word personified generally the brute forces, which were quelled or controlled by the orderly power of Zeus. The cardinal winds were distinct in themselves and their parentage from the 'unprofitable' storm-winds (Hesiod, *Theog.* 870), being of 'heavenly' birth (children of Astraeus and Eos). But they belonged to the family of Gaia; accordingly they were sometimes represented (*e.g.*, Boreas on the chest of Cypselus) as serpent-footed like the rebellious Giants, the serpent being the symbol of Earth.⁶⁹⁹ A play on the twofold meaning of the word (*kedos*), a marriage connection and domestic trouble or mourning. Here it may either denote Helen or the husband's kin.⁷¹⁷ This simile is used by Statius, *Achill.* ii. 166 ff., to describe Achilles, in his maiden's disguise, aroused by the sound of arms.⁷²⁰ Cf. 65, but here the idea of a bridal rite disappears, leaving only the sense of a joyous beginning.⁷³⁵ The priest (*hiereus*) in his office of slaughterer. Cf. 1235.⁷⁴⁸ So in Virgil, *Aen.* ii. 573, Helen is called the 'common Erinys' of Troy and her country.⁷⁵⁴ The old doctrine of the divine jealousy (*nemesis*) waiting on prosperity is here embodied in metaphor: 'wealth, waxing adult, begets woe.'⁷⁸⁰ Lit. 'bearing a false stamp of praise,' a metaphor from base coinage. The closing words, applicable to the guilty house of Atreus, serve as a prelude to the catastrophe, which now begins with the entrance of the king.⁸⁰³ This allusion to the sacrifice of Iphigeneia rests upon a conjecture [Franz].

Third Episode, 782-974.

Agamemnon has entered the orchestra (L.), drawn (by slaves?) in a travelling chariot with Cassandra, as a prisoner. The queen subsequently appears from her door (R.), with handmaids.

⁸¹³ 'Not from the tongue' (of rival pleaders), but on the irrefragable witness of Ilion's sins. ⁸¹⁷ The urn of acquittal (*Eumen.* 749) was empty; only the hope or fancy of a 'hand' (=vote) drew near it. A conjectural reading [Casaubon] gives the sense: 'hope filled not the urn but only approached the brim (lip)'; compare the Hesiodic picture (*Works*, 96) of the jar of Pandora, where "Hope alone tarried, within the strong abode, beneath the lips of the jar." ⁸²⁴ A grim, sarcastic allusion to the 'wooden' horse. This obvious interpretation is set aside by Verrall, who supposes the horse to have been typical of Argos, having been created there, according to the local legends, by Poseidon. Cf. *Septem c. Theb.* 462. ⁸²⁶ As the cosmic setting of the Pleiades (Nov. 3) marked the close of the sailing season (Hesiod, *Works*, 618 ff.), this date is probably adopted to account for the shipwreck. Tzetzes, following the same tradition, criticised Tryphiodorus, his predecessor, for describing the horse as crowned with flowers, as though the time had been spring. ⁸²⁸ That of Priam and his princely sons, Polites and Deiphobus. ⁸³⁷ So Hippias (in Plutarch): "The envious are troubled by others' good fortunes as well as by their own misfortunes." Socrates described envy as a festering wound and a saw in the heart. ⁸⁴¹ Odysseus with his superior foresight shirked the expedition and feigned madness, but was detected by Palamedes. This legend was developed

in the 'Cypria' (cf. *Od.* xxiv. 117) and used by Aeschylus in a tragedy, 'Palamedes.' ⁸⁴⁵ This grand assembly (*panegyris*), like the allusions to the *demos* (883, 938), suggests the Athenian ecclesia rather than the Homeric agora, in which the princes were the speakers. ⁸⁴⁹ The two forms of surgical treatment in cases too bad for simples; the former appears in metaphor (for a drastic or violent cure), cf. *Choeph.* 537. ⁸⁵⁵ The queen re-enters with her attendants, cf. 908. ⁸⁶² The regal chair, cf. 260. ⁸⁶⁵ This rendering [O. Marbach, L. Campbell] implies that Clytemnestra has heard of Agamemnon's amours (cf. 1349); it may be supposed that she casts a vindictive glance on Cassandra. ⁸⁷² An image suggested by the Homeric phrase, 'to put on a clothing of earth' = 'to be buried.' For Geryoneus, the triple-bodied giant slain by Heracles, see Hesiod, *Theog.* 287 ff. ⁸⁸¹ Strophius, king of Phocis, dwelt at Crisa at the foot of Parnassus; his son was Pylades, the friend of Orestes. (For another tradition see Pausan. ii. 29.) In the original legend Orestes was only sent away after the murder. ⁸⁹⁰ Several editors, following Wellauer, interpret the words as referring to the beacon-fires (compared to torches, l. 22). This would furnish additional evidence, if it were needed, that Agamemnon was a party to the signalling, though the pre-arrangement is quite clearly implied from the outset. But the phrase used here (lit. 'holding of torches') may denote the lights in Clytemnestra's chamber, originated, as Conington thinks, by the custom of torches held up by slaves, which suggested the Homeric picture of golden youths holding torches in the palace of Alcinous (*Od.* vii. 100). Verrall refers it to the lighting of the

king to bed, for which Clytemnestra waits in vain.
⁸⁹⁷ The strong rope attached from the mast-head to the bow. ⁹¹¹ She means the house of Hades. The words 'justice' and 'justly' have, except for her, an innocent meaning—the justice which ordered his victorious return. ⁹¹⁴ Clytemnestra was the daughter of Tyndareus (83) and Leda; Helen was the child of the latter by Zeus. ⁹²⁰ She kneels with her head bent toward the ground, an attitude essentially un-Greek, like kissing the ground by way of obeisance. Her motive is to excite popular prejudice as well as to bring *nemesis* upon him. ⁹²⁹ Another version of the same maxim is quoted by Herodotus (i. 32) as a saying of Solon to Croesus. ⁹³³ A taunt: 'did you vow in fear to forego all pomp?' ⁹⁴⁸ He hopes to mitigate the offence by walking barefoot, but still feels that the precious stuffs (used properly for solemn festivities) are profaned. ⁹⁵⁴ According to heroic usage, cf. Hom. *Il.* i. 167. ⁹⁶⁰ The finer 'sea-purple' (946) was obtained from the juice of the murex, which was found off the coast of Laconia as well as in the Phoenician waters (Pausan. iii. 21, cf. Ezek. xxvii. 7). The bright crimson dye was 'fast,' but otherwise the colour was restored by drying in the sun; the poet dwells on this quality and on the costliness of the dye ('renewable, precious as silver'). The royal palace, as in the East, would contain a store of dyed garments, carpets and hangings; such were among the chief spoils which fell to a conqueror, *e.g.* Alexander the Great. Cf. *Choeph.* 1013. The manufacture is fully described by Kenrick, 'Phoenicia,' ch. viii. ⁹⁷² The lord of the house is *teleios* as in chief authority, cf. *Choeph.* 652. Zeus is *teleios* in a higher sense; his authority

overrules in conflicting issues and determines finally what shall be. Agamemnon has just entered the house; Clytemnestra remains and prays with uplifted hands.

Third Stasimon, 975-1034.

⁹⁸⁰ Spitting was a means of averting any evil omen.
⁹⁹⁰ A dirge (*threnos*) or elegy was accompanied by the flute; the lyre was associated with the festal dance (*choros*). Hence this strain of foreboding is a 'threnody of Erinys without the lyre' (cf. *Eumen.* 330) and 'unrehearsed,' not like the solemn rhythmic chant 'taught' by the poet himself. ⁹⁹² The sensation of anxiety is described in physical terms as an eddying of the heart against the wall of the breast. Compare the similarly imaginative description of death-like pallor caused by fear (1121 ff.). ¹⁰²¹ Incantation was used to staunch wounds, e.g. Hom. *Od.* xiv. 457, cf. *Prom. V.* 487. But, the poet says, it cannot restore the blood of a slain man. ¹⁰²⁴ Asclepius, son of Apollo, was struck by the lightning of Zeus, because he brought back Hippolytus to life. ¹⁰²⁶ One for the subject, another for the king.

Fourth Episode, 1035-1448.

Agamemnon has entered to prepare for the sacrifice by a lustral bath, which should purge him from the soil of war and travel. Clytemnestra meanwhile summons Cassandra to take her place at the altar, where she will be installed in the household by participation in the washing of hands (*Eumen.* 626), the first part of the sacrificial rite in which all shared. ¹⁰⁴¹ The slave's fare is the 'cake' (*maza*), cf. Hesiod, *Works*,

442. Heracles was bound to service under Omphale, queen of Lydia, after he attacked the Delphic oracle [illustration No. 11] for denying him counsel respecting his atonement for the murder of Iphitus. ¹⁰⁴⁵ The poet expresses his aristocratic contempt for newly acquired wealth. Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* ii. 32. ¹⁰⁵⁰ Aristophanes similarly likens the barbarian speech to the twittering of swallows. The word *barbaros* itself suggests a discordant jargon. ¹⁰⁵⁶ The altar of Zeus, as guardian of the house (*Herkeios*) and its property (*Ktesios*). It is regarded as the centre of the dwelling and called by an epithet elsewhere only used of the old altar of Delphi, the supposed centre of the earth. ¹⁰⁷⁵ For the dirge is the opposite of the paean, which belonged to Apollo as the healer and Zeus as the saviour. Cf. the prologue of Euripides' *Alkestis*, where Thanatos reproaches this god for coming near a corpse. ¹⁰⁸¹ The name 'Apollon' was ambiguous, like Helene (686); it might be interpreted 'destroyer' (cf. Archil. fr. 27 Bergk.). His title 'god of ways' (Agyieus) was connected, according to the grammarians, with his office as guardian of the house, which was symbolised by a conical pillar outside the door. (For such an unwrought image, found in Corcyra, see Mitt. Ath. 19, 340.) This suggests Cassandra's taunt, and the pillar itself may have been shown: Pollux indeed refers to it as a regular ornament of the stage. The same inference may be drawn from the addresses and prayers to Apollo in the *Electra* of Sophocles, where he would be invoked as having brought Orestes on his way home. So Polyneices takes leave of him when quitting his father's home, Eurip. *Phoen.* 631. ¹¹¹¹ She sees dimly

something spread out on Clytemnestra's arms ; presently, discerning more clearly, she compares it to a net, but her words are incoherent from terror ; at last, just as Clytemnestra strikes, she realises that it is a robe (1127). ¹¹¹⁷ The Erinyes, charged to avenge the dead children and Iphigeneia, will raise their infernal shriek (*ololugmos*, 587, 595) over the penal sacrifice (the death of Agamemnon), by which the house expiates its guilt. Death by stoning (as appears from the few recorded examples) went with crime of the sacrilegious order. ¹¹²⁷ The horns are suggested by Clytemnestra's outstretched arms holding up the robe, or possibly by the double crescent blade of the axe seen behind or through it (1149). ¹¹³⁵ The language reflects the Greek contempt for the vulgar kind of professional divination ; it no longer imposed on cultivated minds. ¹¹⁴⁴ The legend purported to explain the wailing cry of the nightingale, with the fact that she and the swallow are chased by the hoopoe. The latter was said to have been a king, Tereus, whose wife (Philomela or Aedon) from jealousy of her sister (Procne) killed her child, Itys or Itylus ; cf. *Od.* xix. 518 ff., where the story as here illustrates a woman's grief. ¹¹⁶⁰ The rivers of 'woe' and 'wailing' in Hades. ¹¹⁷² Her ear 'burns' with inspiration or, perhaps, with the strange music of the Furies' chant (1187, cf. 1236), audible to her alone. According to the common rendering she predicts her 'falling' on the ground ; this use of the verb is peculiar, but it happens to occur in the Homeric description of Cassandra's death (*Od.* xi. 423), which may possibly have been in the poet's mind. ¹¹⁷⁹ A bride appeared unveiled on the third day after marriage

(Becker, *Charicles*, p. 489); the ceremony of unveiling was an occasion for gifts. Cf. *Choeph.* 811. ¹¹⁸² The metaphor is from a strong breeze at sea springing up toward dawn; the oracle is the wind, the calamity which it brings to light is the surge rising higher and higher against the sky. ¹¹⁹⁰ The Erinyes are likened to a troop of revellers (*komos*) who, instead of passing by or serenading outside the house, have broken in and cannot be dislodged, being 'familiar' there: they bring about the reprisals within the kin, by which the curse of Thyestes is fulfilled. The burden of their chant is twofold (like the choral strophe and antistrophe), linking together Atreus' murder of Thyestes' children and the adultery of Thyestes with Atreus' wife, Aerope (1193). Prometheus (*Prom. V.* 860), like Cassandra, founds a claim to foreknowledge on his knowledge of the distant past. ¹¹⁹⁷ The reason of her insistency is found in the legend, which is thus outlined by Apollodorus (iii. 12, 5): "Apollo being desirous of Cassandra offered to impart his prophetic skill to her; but after he had instructed her, she refused herself to him; therefore he took away the credit from her soothsaying." Hence she demands a strict and solemn oath as in a court of justice, repeating her entreaty to the last. The elder replies that an oath could not help her and might hurt him, being by its nature penal: the same word, 'pain,' is applied by Hesiod (*Theog.* 792) to the Styx, by which the gods swear. ¹²²³ Aegisthus, the rightful avenger (1585). ¹²³³ 'Amphisbaena,' a fabulous snake, 'moving both ways.' ¹³³⁵ As slaughtering a victim to Hades (cf. 735). Vulg. 'Hades-mother,' *i.e.* an infernal bacchanal [Conington]. ¹²⁴⁸ 'What I predict admits of no remedy.

¹²⁵⁷ The ambiguous epithet (Lukeios) would usually convey this meaning to Greek ears, though it is occasionally treated as from *lukos*, 'wolf' (*Sept. c. Theb.* 131). ¹²⁶⁵ As a *mantis* in Apollo's service she carries a staff of laurel wood and a wreath (*stemma*) of laurel wrapped round with wool. The Homeric Chryses (*Il.* i.), priest of Apollo, carries the *stemma* twisted about his staff, which is adorned with gold. Cassandra flings both on the ground, together with some other object (1266), perhaps an image of the god worn on her head or breast [Munro]. ¹²⁷⁰ According to Pollux, the seer wore a long straight-falling white *chiton* and a net-like woollen robe over it. She 'sees' the god (as Orestes 'sees' the Furies) divesting her of it. ¹²⁷⁷ The altar of Zeus (*herkeios*) in the palace; Priam in Troy was slain at such an altar, and Cassandra had her special place there as a seer. ¹²⁹⁸ It was a good omen, when the victim went quietly to the altar, as though under the god's control. ¹³²⁴ Orestes. The concluding lines are assigned by some to the Elder. But the thought is in harmony with Cassandra's tone of unrelieved misery. ¹³³² A common Greek sentiment, cf. Herod. iv. 49, 'mortals are never sated with prosperity.'

Fifth Episode, 1344-1448.

This scene shows the dramatic difficulty arising from the conditions of the Greek stage, where the Chorus happens to be directly concerned in the action at a critical point. The hurried debate, however, is highly effective and indeed realistic. The Leader speaks first (1347) and last, proposing the discussion and

reporting the decision of the majority. Of the others (see note on *Eumen.* 558) four give dilatory counsels. According to Verrall, these are conspirators trying to gain time, while those who denounce 'tyranny' are the loyalists, overpowered in the last scene by Aegisthus and his guards. But the Chorus appear to be merely distracted, as in the *Septem c. Theb.* and *Supplices*, not divided as representing factions. The usurping nobleman or 'tyrant' in the Athenian sense would rather have a party in the populace. ¹³⁷² Probably by withdrawing a curtain or 'traverse,' the bodies of Agamemnon and Cassandra are now disclosed, while Clytemnestra enters (R.); the former is covered with the purple web (*Choeph.* 991). ¹⁴⁰⁸ As causing madness. ¹⁴¹¹ The punning assonance is characteristic; cf. 1461. The first verb recalls the axe (*dikella*, hatchet), the second the sword (*Choeph.* 1011).

Kommos, 1449-1576.

The term *Kommos* (lit. 'lamentation') was given to a mournful or impassioned lyrical passage divided between the Chorus and actor or actors. The lyrical passages are often broken by iambic or anapaestic lines; the latter metre is used here by the Chorus-leader and by Clytemnestra in her responses. ¹⁴⁶¹ The strange punning phrase appears to refer to Helena, a 'strong-built (cause of) strife'; but the text is corrupt. ¹⁴⁷³ Or 'he' (the demon); so in the metrical version. ¹⁴⁷⁷ The Alastor of the house. The description suggests the primitive idea of the blood-sucking ghost, passing (after the poet's fashion) into the metaphor of a running sore. ¹⁴⁸⁸ It is not the demon working his

own will ; it is the will of Zeus. ¹⁵²⁰ Following this speech is a sentence, so abrupt that it is usually rejected as an interpolation : ' not ignoble, I deem, was his death.' This is assigned by Verrall to a conspirator, obtruding an apology for the murder. ¹⁵⁴⁰ The corpse is lying in a ' silver-walled ' bath. ¹⁵⁵⁸ The river Acheron. ¹⁵⁶⁹ A name, otherwise hardly known, for the house of Pelops. Pleisthenes seems to have been inserted by one tradition as a son of Atreus, murdered by his father.

Exodus, 1577-1673.

The scene following the final choral passage was termed the exodus (originally, a processional exit of the Chorus, such as that with which the *Eumenides* is closed). Aegisthus enters with a body-guard escorting him.

¹⁵⁸⁵ He ignores the crime of Thyestes (1193), which led to his banishment. ¹⁵⁹² In honour of his return from exile. Similarly, in the Homeric version, Agamemnon was treacherously lured to a feast in pretended welcome on his landing from Troy. ¹⁶⁷¹ He is likened to the ' bird that fights at home ' (*Eumen.* 861) ; that is, he is afraid to fight abroad.

CHOEPHOROE

Prologue, 1-21.

THE architectural background is the same. The tomb of Agamemnon has now been introduced ; the audience, however, are expected to ignore the palace-front while the scene is at the grave (down to l. 587) and *vice versâ*. Orestes and Pylades enter by the left passage (as coming from abroad) and stand by the tomb. The procession of serving-maids forming the Chorus is followed by Electra ; the men, seeing them, retire (L.). The action is included in one day, the first episode in the early morning, the second not till evening (660).

The prologue serves to explain the situation and to announce the impending vengeance (18). The first part (to l. 10) is missing in the MSS. ; it has been restored from scholia and Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 1124-6, 1170 f.

¹ The power of Zeus extends to the realm of Hades through Hermes, his son, to whom he has delegated the guidance of the departed spirits. A simpler interpretation is, 'who guardest my father's majesty' in the world of the dead [Wilamowitz]. ⁴ The raised tomb or barrow, on which he lays his hand in speaking. There was, perhaps, a pillar on the tomb dedicated to Hermes (cf. Cicero, *de Leg.* ii. 26). ⁶ Orestes, now a youth of eighteen (Soph. *Elect.* 11-14), has

refrained from cutting the lock which, if he had dwelt at home, would have been offered to Inachus, the river-god of Argos (*Agam.* 24), in gratitude for the nurture of his young life. The local River not only supported the land, but was a source of physical health and strength. The personal offering implied a kind of bodily connection with the god. ⁸ The other lock, which he lays on the tomb, is a mourning token. We may compare the scene in the *Iliad* (xxiii. 148) where Achilles lays in the hand of his dead comrade Patroclus the lock which should have been dedicated to the river Spercheius, thereby pledging his bodily service to the dead, whom he was to avenge. At a regular funeral such tokens were displayed in front of the house. *E.g.*, in the *Alcestis* the women remark that there are "no shorn locks laid at the door, such as are wont to be cut in mourning for the dead." An interesting parallel is found in the last scene of Sophocles' *Ajax* (1174), where son, wife, and brother offer locks of their hair to the dead hero. ⁹ Cf. Eurip. *Alcest.* 767. The mourner's attitude is represented here by the outstretched arms, denoting the final leave-taking at the 'prothesis' or lying-in-state. This was part of the ritual of burial, and appears frequently in funeral designs. [See illustration.] ¹⁵ Drink-offerings to the dead or the infernal powers (*e.g.* the Erinyes) had the simple motive of feeding and appeasing them; hence the term here used, which is derived from a verb meaning to 'soothe.' The play takes its name from the maidens carrying such an offering (*choê*) to Agamemnon. A libation to the celestial gods (*spondê*), consisting usually of wine, was not merely an offering but a

consecration of the feast (*Agam.* 246), or a means of calling the gods to witness some solemn engagement: "no light thing is an oath and the blood of lambs and libations of pure wine and the plighting of our faith with clasped right hands" (*Il.* iv. 157 ff.). Hence the term 'spondee' (*spondeios*) for the foot, composed of two long syllables, giving a slow and measured rhythm suitable for the accompaniment of a libation or of a hymn such as the festal 'paean' (*Agam.* l.c.). See Schmidt, *Rhythmic and Metric*, p. 29.

Parodus, 22-83.

²² Clytemnestra had buried Agamemnon without funeral rites or the subsequent offerings at the tomb. Now, for her own security, she seeks to repair the latter omission by a drink-offering, and she has subjected Electra and her slave-women to the indignity of going through the mockery of a dirge, as a substitute for the wailing which should have followed on his death. ²⁴ Solon, according to Plutarch, attempted to restrain this usage: the women at funerals "were forbidden to tear themselves, and no hired mourner was to utter lamentable notes or to act anything else that tended to excite sorrow." But, as these ceremonies were of immemorial antiquity (cf. the Homeric epithet of a wife, 'with torn cheeks'), so they survived even in Plutarch's time. ²⁹ This implies the Doric chiton with its full folds over the breast. ³² The nightmare, or the cry which announced it, is strangely called a 'Phoibos.' Verrall suggests that the word, before it was appropriated to Apollo, may have had the general sense of an oracular spirit. He

explains the name 'Phoibe' (*Eumen.* 7) in the same way, not as a mere counterpart of that of the god, and regards the impersonal as the earlier meaning of 'Bacchus' (e.g. 'a Bacchus of Hades' = 'one possessed by Hades'). Hermann conjectures 'phoitos,' a 'delusion,' but the word is doubtful. ⁴⁷ Some spell or formula of prayer dictated by Clytemnestra. ⁶⁵ This is best understood as describing simply the incidence of justice, now sudden, now slow, not (as Borchard suggests) the contrasted fortune of Clytemnestra (in the sunshine), Orestes (in the twilight), Agamemnon (in the night of death). ⁶⁷ Or 'for a warranty': Wilamowitz observes that the word (*titas*) is used, in an inscription from Gortyn, in the sense of a guarantor for debts to the State. The general conception may be compared with that of the kinsman's blood 'crying from the ground,' in *Genesis* iv. 10: "cursed art thou (Cain) from the ground, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand." The stain upon the earth is called 'Até' (perdition), pursuing the bloodguilty with physical as well as mental torment; the earth is poisoned for him and her fruits turned to corruption. Cf. *Eumen.* 783, 804. ⁷¹ Schömann understands the 'seats of the nymphs,' i.e. the spring-water. ⁷ It is nowhere indicated whether these women were captives brought from Troy with Cassandra or slaves of the house captured in earlier forays. The leader at least is older than Electra (171).

First Episode, 84-305.

The action in this scene is distinct and concentrated: the meeting of Orestes and Electra, followed immediately by the planning of vengeance.

⁹² This is described in Sophocles, *Electra* 893, as 'ancestral,' the family burying-place. Electra performs all the acts of worship herself, standing at the tomb apart from, but near, the Chorus. She first sets one or more floral wreaths (93) on the pillar (*stèle*) or the base of the mound. ⁹⁵ A variation of the common formula, in which the worshipper asked a *quid pro quo* ; she bitterly substitutes 'evil' for 'good' in the closing words, which are uttered aside. ⁹⁸ After the completion of a rite of purification, the refuse (whatever it was into which the expelled 'alastor' was supposed to have escaped) was cast away with eyes averted for fear of meeting the evil spirit, or irritating him by appearing to watch his actions. Such spirits being under the control of Hecate, the earthenware censer used in purging a house (at Athens) was thrown out at the street corner, where her image stood. Theocritus, *Id.* xxiv., describes a similar treatment of the snakes which attacked Heracles in his cradle ; they were burned, and a serving-maid flung away the dust without looking round. Even where there is no fear of malicious influence, the same motive appears. Odysseus is instructed to 'turn away' when he casts off the miraculous veil lent him by Leucothea, and to turn his back when the Ghosts approach him in Hades (*Od.* v. 350, x. 528). Cf. Soph. *Oed. Col.* 490. The Roman rule of veiling the head during prayer and sacrifice is traced by Vergil (*Aen.* iii. 405-7) to the fear of some 'hostile presence,' *i.e.* some ill-omened sight which might displease the gods, or some enemy's eye which might vitiate the rite. This custom was strange to the Greeks ; but they, as well as the Romans, had the rule of silence during a sacrifice

as a precaution against ill-omened sounds. ¹⁰⁹ The metaphor suggests the primitive use of the tomb for sacrifices to the dead or to the Earth, their keeper, before the altar was developed from it. Herodotus, iv. 172, describes the Libyan Namasones as taking oaths in this very way, the tombs being those of the worthiest of their ancestors. ¹²¹ We may read Electra's thought: 'Slay the slayer'? Aegisthus, yes; but dare I pray for my mother's death? She begins to be conscious in herself of the struggle which awaits Orestes. ¹²² This primitive rule was accepted as the obverse of the duty of kindness to friends. It had the sanction of the gnomic poets; e.g. Solon (p. 13, 5) desires to be 'bitter' to his enemies. Only extreme vindictiveness is condemned as characteristic of the slave (Eurip. *Ion*, 1046, cf. inf. 268) or the barbarian (Eurip. *Medea*, 809). ¹²³ The word (from *ku-*, to conceive) is the same which is used in *Eumen.* 662 of embryonic human life. This view of Earth as perpetually creating fresh germs of life was the starting-point of the doctrine of immortality engrafted on the Eleusinian cult of Demeter. ¹²⁹ This offering (probably of water only) is strangely described by a word properly denoting the water for washing hands before a sacrifice, or at a funeral (but only as preventing contagion, Eurip. *Alcest.* 100). ¹⁴⁶ To avoid mixing a curse with a blessing, she ends as she began with a good prayer, the malediction being interposed. ¹⁵⁰ She pours three times (129, 142) on the upper part of the mound (Soph. *Elect.* 894). That this was prescribed appears from Soph. *Antig.* 431, where the heroine 'crowns' her dead brother with a 'thrice-poured drink-offering,' and *Oed. Col.* 479 ff., where the Erinyes receive two libations

from separate bowls filled with spring-water, and water mixed with honey from another bowl. The tradition may be traced back to the later Homeric age at least ; Odysseus in Hades (*Od.* x. 519) pours a triple offering 'to all the dead,' consisting of honey with milk, wine, and (lastly) water. Cf. Eurip. *Iphig. in Taur.* 159 ff., Aesch. *Pers.* 610 ff. The term *pelanos*, which Electra uses, l. 92, may denote honey combined with water or milk. This, when thickened with oil, could be burned on the altar (Eurip. *Ion*, 707, cf. *Agam.* 96), or mixed with meal and offered in the form of a cake. ¹⁵¹ Cf. *Agam.* 645, but the word here is regretful rather than ironical, bearing with it a presage of 'healing' and victory. ¹⁵⁵ The grave is called a 'fastness,' secure against good and ill alike. ¹⁶¹ The epithet (of Homeric origin) describes the recurved or S-shaped bow. Another Homeric epithet (168) refers to the girdle of the chiton as worn low on the hips, the dress falling over it in folds. ¹⁷¹ Electra is half distracted by her own doubts, half eager to prompt the other to utter the hope, which she will not allow herself to put in words, the more because such a 'chance' prediction at an opportune moment would count as a favourable omen. ¹⁷² Electra's mask being that of a mourner, with close-cut hair (cf. Anthol. Pal. 7, 37), the spectators would at once see what she points to ; the Chorus-leader, however, is slow to guess till she gives a broader hint (176) : "the lock is very like my own" (or 'our own,' implying some marked peculiarity in the hair of the family, which would be noticeable in the wigs). ¹⁸³ Lit. 'a surge of gall.' Wilamowitz rightly takes this in a quasi-medical rather than a metaphorical sense, implying a theory

that gall is colder than blood and consequently chills the heart or liver (cf. 273), causing faintness. He explains from the same point of view the sudden pain in the heart, and the description of the tears as 'brackish' (lit. 'thirsty,' but there is a corresponding Pythagorean use of the word) and forced from the eyes as by physical anguish.²⁰⁵ The evidence of the footprints has, of course, little weight except as against the presumption that the lock had merely been 'sent' (180). It adds something to her hope that the bringer (especially as he has visited the tomb with a companion) is Orestes. This moment of extreme suspense is skilfully chosen by the dramatist to bring Orestes forward.²⁰⁹ It is implied by the particular mention of the heel and ball ('tendon') that Electra notices, not the dimensions, but the shape of the foot as compared with her own. As Wilamowitz remarks, a foot with a high instep might be distinguished by the prints from a flat foot.²³¹ Presumably an embroidered cloak which Electra had woven and sent to him at Phocis. This last token leaves no room for misgiving. The recognition, however, is made to turn throughout on Electra's loving intuitions; she divines first that Orestes has been at the tomb, and then (on that assumption) that the votive lock is his. Euripides, in the criticism which he foists into his own recognition scene (*Elect.* 503 ff.), fails to understand these motives, and attributes gratuitous absurdities to the poet by assuming, e.g. that the ground was rocky, that Electra judged by the texture of the hair and the size of the feet, and that the garment was made for Orestes when a child. The question is discussed at length by Verrall

(introduction and notes). ²³² The inweaving of variegated designs is noticed in Homer (*Il.* iii. 126 ff.). The hunting-scene here mentioned is best illustrated by vases (British Mus., First Vase Room) painted with friezes of beasts, real and fabulous, relieved by rosettes and other conventional ornaments. The batten (*spathê*) is a short piece of wood used to close up the threads in weaving. ²⁴⁰ A reminiscence of Andromache's address to Hector, *Il.* vi. 429 ff. ²⁴² That is, Iphigeneia, the only sister mentioned by Aeschylus: he does not notice Chrysothemis, who appears in the *Electra* of Sophocles, nor Iphianassa (identified with Iphigeneia by Lucretius, i. 85). ²⁴³ As the lawful head of the family. ²⁴⁵ The Saviour, *Agam.* 245. ²⁴⁹ As the eagle strangling a snake was an omen or symbol of victory, the simile emphasises the ignominy of Agamemnon's defeat. ²⁵⁵ The 'Zeus-fostered' king was the sacrificer in chief; but his standing before the gods is regarded here as dependent on his right to the royal title. The usurper Aegisthus might continue the offerings, but Zeus would refuse them. The appeal to a god's interest in this matter is familiar in Homer, e.g. *Il.* i. 40. ²⁵⁹ The eagle was the principal bird of omen, and the favourite messenger of Zeus (*Il.* xxiv. 292).

²⁶¹ Lit. 'days when beeves are slaughtered,' the sacrifice being followed by a royal feast and a public distribution of the meat. Cf. *Agam.* 1592 (a senechal's day). ²⁶³ The funeral pile was made of pitch-pine, so as to burn more rapidly. ²⁷¹ Apollo's warnings came in dreams at the eventful waking-hour (*orthros*, 'dawn,' cf. *Agam.* 29). ²⁷⁵ According to a new interpretation [Verrall], the phrase describes Orestes not

as indignant at the loss of his patrimony, but as indignantly refusing money penalties, which might be offered in compensation for the bloodshed : this is the question at issue in the Homeric trial-scene, *Il.* xviii. 497 ff. ²⁷⁹ The text can hardly stand, as it includes Electra in the penalties. Verrall, by an ingenious conjecture, gets rid of the pronoun (dual) and gains a graphic description of the leprosy as 'spun' in threads of corruption, *i.e.* spreading in filaments on the flesh, like the telter 'barking about' the body 'with loathsome crust' (Shakspeare, *Hamlet* i. v.). The disease is first described as a 'blight' (cf. *Eumen.* 785), and then defined with terrible precision by its chief symptom, the hairy growth, which guided the priest under the Mosaic law (*Levit.* xiii. 10). The prevalence of this disease in several forms may be inferred by Strabo's mention of a medicinal spring in Elis, which was used in the cure of '*alphi* and *leucae* (the kind here specified) and *lichenes*.' ²⁸³ The Erinys, or embodied curse, springs as it were from the blood itself. ²⁹² So, according to the legend (cf. *Sept. c. Theb.* 765 ff.), Oedipus as a patricide would not allow himself to be served from the golden cup, which had belonged to his fathers.

Kommos, 306-478.

³⁰⁶ The relation of Zeus to the Fates is obscured by giving the latter word (*Moirai*) the sense of pre-appointed destiny instead of its true meaning, 'apportionment,' or 'order.' When these powers are represented in the Hesiodic *Theogony* (211 ff.) as older than Zeus (being daughters of Night, the

child of primeval Chaos), we should infer only that a certain order existed in the universe before Zeus. But he, as the personal guardian of that order, is consistently regarded as acting with the 'Moirai.' In another passage of the same poem (904) they are called the daughters of Zeus and Themis! See below, l. 647, and *Eumen.* 28. ³¹³ The primitive law of retaliation, sanctioned by Zeus (*Agam.* 1562) and justifying the blood-feud (inf. 400 ff.). ³¹⁵ The tone is somewhat like Hamlet's 'thou poor ghost!' (to his dead father). There are characteristic differences between the speakers throughout the *Kommos*. The young Orestes is faint-hearted till he is roused by hearing of the indignities done to his father (435-8). Electra is impulsive and fiercely resentful toward her mother (430). The women of the Chorus are truculent and vindictive, like slaves. Only the leader is calm and counsels patience. To her, as she speaks in a sense for the poet, is given the exposition of doctrine in the opening passage and subsequently. ³²⁴ The fire of the funeral-pile. ³²⁸ That is, to the dead. The wailing at the tomb awakens him to a present sense of his wrongs, and aids justice thereby. ³⁴⁴ Lit. 'the paeon in the royal hall shall usher the kinsman new-mingled,' *i.e.* newly consecrated by the bowl. Cf. *Agam.* 245. The 'new mixing' signifies more than the renewal of the ties of love between the restored heir and his loyal people; for, where kinsmen were concerned, the blood-tie was believed to be kept alive or revived by their drinking wine together, a survival of more primitive rites, in which kinsmen mingled in a bowl either their own blood or that of a victim slain for the purpose.

According to Plato (*Critias*, p. 119) the blood of a bull was so employed in the imaginary barbaric 'Atlantis,' whence we may infer that such customs were not unknown in Greece. ³⁵⁸ Hades and Persephone. ³⁶⁰ A 'king of kings,' an Homeric title, which had its counterpart in the Persian title of royalty inscribed by Cyrus on his own tomb. ³⁷³ 'Hyperborean': the Greeks imagined an earthly paradise in a region beyond the north wind (Boreas), exempt from cold as from disease and old age (Pindar, *Pyth.* x.). Rawlinson on Herod. iv. 33 (Grant's abridged edition, p. 347) notices one tradition pointing to Britain. ³⁷⁵ The joint lament of the two children working on the dead as a scourge (?). Verrall suggests that the epithet 'double' denotes the peculiar duplicate structure of the dirge, or rather double-triple arrangement, in which the triplets (Orestes, Electra, Chorus), four in number, are broken by the anapaestic passages. ³⁹⁵ A strange hieratic epithet used here in place of *teleios* (*Agam.* 972), but applied to any powerful god, e.g. Eros ('the bloomy Love,' Aristoph. *Av.* 1737, transl. by Kennedy). ⁴⁰⁶ The Erinyes are significantly called 'curses of the dead,' as though they were ghosts permitted to avenge themselves on the living. ⁴²² Orestes is now brought to the threshold of his determination, announced first in this half-metaphor. The succeeding part of the *Kommos* is more impassioned, and no further doctrinal exhortations are interposed. ⁴²³ The Arians (a Persian word, meaning 'noble') inhabited the region of Cabul, the Kissians formed a province of Susiana, both belonging to the Persian empire. Cf. *Pers.* 119 ff. Oriental wailing-women were, doubtless, among those hired for Greek funerals in the poet's time. ⁴²⁵ At the hurried

burial of Agamemnon immediately after his murder, when the women-slaves, and they alone, were allowed to perform a perfunctory dirge for the sake of appearance. The indignity consisted in the absence of all members of the household [illustration No. 6], which Clytemnestra threatens, *Agam.* 1554, and of all the citizens. ⁴³⁹ The Greek word is thus explained by Suidas: the hands and feet were cut off and tied under the armpits or round the neck, with the object of disabling the ghost and preventing his pursuit of the living. Paley compares the custom, not long disused in England, of interring suicides with a stake through the body, which may have started from the primitive idea of laying the ghost. The denial of funeral offerings had a similar motive, viz., to starve and weaken the dead man. ⁴⁵⁰ The word is wanting in the text. ⁴⁷¹ Like lint: medicine is a favourite field of metaphor. Cf. *Agam.* 17, and below, l. 529. ⁴⁷³ The final prayer is purposely concluded with a word of good omen.

Second Episode, 479-584.

⁴⁸⁵ He alone of the 'well-feasted' dead will go without the proper offerings—the 'savour' (*knisa*) of sacrificial meat, and the blood, which was still as in the Homeric age (*Od.* xi. 36) poured into a trench by the altar or tomb, to be received by the earth. Euripides (*Elect.* 514) represents Orestes as sacrificing a victim to him at this stage; Aeschylus, with more truth as well as more dramatic effect, makes it a condition of the offerings that the king shall first assert his 'heroic' dignity and power. ⁴⁸⁷ A fragmentary notice from a

history of Argolis by Deinias may imply that Electra's marriage with Pylades took place on the anniversary of Agamemnon's death in the month Gamelion. He was entitled to these nuptial dues not only as her father, but as a power in the nether-world, whose sanction was needed. It was the cruel purpose of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra to prevent her marriage for fear of raising up a future avenger : this is made a prominent motive by Euripides. ⁴⁹² The fatal garment is described first as a 'new robe,' suggesting, as Conington remarks, Deianeira's deadly gift (*Soph. Trach.* 613), and then (494) likened, with even deeper irony, to a veil such as Cassandra speaks of, *Agam.* 1179. ⁴⁹⁸ A metaphor from the palaestra. When a bout was drawn, *e.g.* through the combatants falling out of the ring, they closed again 'with the same grip' as before. Orestes, with or without victory, will carry the struggle through to the end. ⁵⁰² The son is here called 'the child of the male' (not merely the 'male child'), not only because the family was perpetuated in the male line, but on the theory (which was held by Democritus, see Aristotle, *de Gener. Anim.* 4, 1) that he is more nearly akin to the father, or (as Apollo argues, *Eumen.* 658) that he has no blood-kinship at all with the mother. The latter view is so far reflected in the Greek language that the terms appropriated to maternity connote chiefly nursing, while the ordinary term for begetting means literally 'planting,' and is in Aeschylus and Sophocles limited to the father : an exception may be found, however, in Euripides, *Alcest.* 294. ⁵⁰⁵⁻⁷ These beautiful lines are probably a gloss, borrowed from Sophocles. ⁵¹⁷ Lit. 'the unconscious dead,' their normal state according

to the old Homeric idea ; but this is contradicted by the poet's language concerning their passions, *e.g.* l. 324. ⁵²⁵ Following the interpretation of the household seers (37). They judged that the serpent, the symbol of the grave, indicated some danger from the dead, but did not see that it also represented Orestes. Hence, instead of putting Clytemnestra on her guard against her son, they merely advised her to send offerings to the tomb, thereby aiding to bring Orestes and Electra together. Presumably the dream was sent from the world below by the agency of Hermes, the giver of sleep. ⁵³⁸ The time of the ceremony is thus shown to be the early morning. ⁵³⁹ Lit. 'a cure of shredding' (medicinal herbs), cf. *Agam.* 17. ⁵⁶² The term survived from an age when it implied mutual aid in war as well as hospitality. The actual spear-friend was Strophius, father of Pylades (*Agam.* 881). Orestes, however, presents himself simply as a stranger commissioned by Strophius. ⁵⁶⁴ This would come naturally from Pylades. ⁵⁷⁴ Aegisthus will quail at the sight of him. ⁵⁷⁸ His death, following the murder of Thyestes' children and that of Agamemnon, is likened to the last of the three libations at a feast ; all are offered to the Erinyes, and in claiming the blood of Aegisthus she (like Zeus) 'saves' the house. ⁵⁷⁹ The actor playing Electra retires to reappear in the part of Clytemnestra. The mother and daughter are nowhere brought together as in the *Electra* of Sophocles. ⁵⁸³ Orestes may refer to Agamemnon, pointing to the tomb, or to Apollo, pointing to his image as Cassandra does (*Agam.* 1081) ; this would imply, however, that the locality was ignored, as the symbol of the god was connected, not with the tomb, but with the house.

First Stasimon, 585-651.

⁵⁸⁹ Lightning-bolts, meteors, comets. ⁵⁹⁵ Aegisthus is glanced at, but the deeper guilt of Clytemnestra is suggested by ranging her with the women famous in legend for crimes against a son (Althaea), a father (Scylla), a husband (the Lemnians). ⁶⁰¹ Some conjectural readings give a somewhat less harsh sense: unholy passion in women prevailing over the marriage-bond [Enger] is stronger than brute or whirlwind [Weil]. But the exceeding wickedness of women corrupted by passion is a common theme (cf. *Od.* xi. 427, of Clytemnestra). ⁶⁰⁵ The death of Meleager had been treated in a tragedy by Phrynichus. ⁶¹⁸ It is implied that she was enamoured of the briber as well as the bribe, a combination of two different versions of the story. ⁶²² He was given up to Hermes, 'conductor of ghosts.' ⁶²³ ff. A corrupt line (628) has destroyed the sense of this passage; as it is here restored, the purport is simply to deprecate a recital of Clytemnestra's misdeeds as interrupting the catalogue of women's sins, which is presently resumed. ⁶³⁰ Aegisthus; cf. 305. ⁶³⁴ The savagery of Lemnus is attested by historical writers, who ascribe it to the Pelasgian element in the population. The story, which points the moral here, is as follows: the men of Lemnus, having neglected the worship of Aphrodite, were impelled by her to forget their own wives for certain Thracian women; the offended wives murdered them in revenge. Herodotus (vi. 138) has another tale, in which the women are the victims. He says, like Aeschylus, that in consequence of these crimes all barbarities of the kind were called in Greece 'Lemnian.' ⁶³⁹ The metaphor

of the sword is more familiar in Hebrew, *e.g.* Ezek. xxi. 1-17. ⁶⁴⁷ Aisa ('equal portion') like Moira (306) stands for moral order in the world; she is therefore the executive of Justice. Erinyes brings into the guilty house the curse, by means of which she discharges it of pollution. The curse is called the 'child' of the crimes which produce it.

Third Episode, 652-783.

⁶⁵² ff. It is now late evening (660). The time, at first the morning and now the evening twilight, reminds us of the grave; the *Electra* of Sophocles opens with the early day (17 f.), in joyous anticipation of victory. Orestes with Pylades enters by the left passage; he knocks thrice at the door, which is supposed to represent the gate of the outer court (561), but is named from the *herkos* instead of the *aule*, as the old courtyard (*aule*) had lost its use in the city. ⁶⁶² Public inns were known as early as Hesiod (*Works*, 493) and perhaps earlier (*Od.* xviii. 329), as the stranger's privilege became restricted. ⁶⁷¹ The eyes are regarded as expressing character in many aspects, *e.g.* *Eumen.* 928 (the eyes of Persuasion), cf. l. 758 (laughter in the eyes), *Agam.* 520 (the eyes of statues seeming to beam with a divine joy), *ib.* 418 (the eyes of Helen's statue, cold and pale in her absence). The last two allusions suggest what the greater sculptors realised in their treatment of the eyes by means of light and shade. ⁷⁰³ The irony here is the counterpart of Clytemnestra's in her reception of Agamemnon. ⁷¹² Addressed to an attendant. ⁷¹³ Vulg. 'these attendants and fellow-travellers,' but the plural should be regarded as conventional (cf.

673, 716) or altered to the singular [Pauw]. Clytemnestra merely notices Pylades, suspecting nothing. Verrall supposes, on the contrary, that Orestes is accompanied by a train of confederates disguised as merchant travellers. But there is no hint to this effect. According to Sophocles, *Elect.* 36, he was commanded by the oracle to do his work without an armed force. Cf. ll. 274, 556. ⁷²² The earthen barrow supported by a stone foundation (4). The same word is applied to an altar with raised base (Soph. *Oed. R.* 183). ⁷³² That is, 'woman of Cilicia'; the names of slaves were often derived from their nationality, e.g. Thrassa, Geta. ⁷⁴⁹ The character of the nurse here suggests a comparison with the Eurycleia of the *Odyssey* (xix.), but the portraiture is more picturesque and naïvely realistic. ⁷⁷³ She is to tell Aegisthus that the message is for his private ear. There is an important variant, giving the sense: 'in the hand of the messenger a crooked story is set straight,' that is (as Peile explains): 'it rests with the bearer of a message to give it whatever turn he pleases.'

Second Stasimon, 783-837.

⁷⁹⁷ The victorious tread of Orestes is compared with the regular and 'rhythmic' paces of a thoroughbred. ⁸⁰¹ The ancestral or 'household' gods, who guard the treasure-chamber in the back part of the house (*muchos*) behind the *megaron*. ⁸⁰⁶ Apollo, dwelling in the recess of his Delphic sanctuary. ⁸¹¹ Cf. *Agam.* 1179. ⁸¹⁵ The character of secrecy belonged to Hermes (the son of Maia) from his association with the dark underworld, and it was likewise a natural

attribute of the messenger god. As he had misled Clytemnestra through the delusive interpretation of her dream (525), so he is prayed to keep dark Orestes' plot. ⁸²³ The genuine dirge still due to Agamemnon. ⁸²⁴ The Chorus appear to chant their song of deliverance beforehand, so far as can be made out from the corrupt text. ⁸³¹ He is to emulate Perseus, the slayer of Medusa, nerving his heart and taking care lest the eye of the Gorgon Clytemnestra should check him. Such appeals to heroic example were full of meaning; for the heroes inspired personal devotion, like the saints in medieval Christendom.

Fourth Episode, 838-934.

⁸⁵⁶ Zeus is invoked, as by Clytemnestra before the final blow (*Agam.* 972), when there is no more to be done by human means. ⁸⁶⁶ Orestes is compared to a combatant in reserve (*ephedros*), waiting to engage the victors. ⁸⁷² They retire, perhaps, into one of the side passages. ⁸⁷³ He enters from the central (?) door and knocks at the side door (R.), supposed to lead to the women's apartments. ⁸⁸⁹ The epithet is ambiguous. The meaning may be 'man-wearying,' *i.e.* a labourer's axe, as Prof. Campbell explains. If it is taken in the other sense ('man-slaying'), it may denote the axe used against Agamemnon. ⁸⁹⁷ The same maternal appeal is found in Homer, *Il.* xxii. 80. ⁸⁹⁹ Pylades probably enters here, not with Orestes at l. 892. The same actor may have played the part of the servant, changing his dress in the short interval. ⁹⁰⁴ The object is to avoid a scene of violence on the stage. To this rule, observed by the Attic dramatists,

the suicide of Ajax in Sophocles' tragedy is no exception. His dying speech has an ethical value.⁹⁰³ Having her son to tend her, as a matter of duty, in old age.⁹¹⁸ Compare her scornful references to Chryseis (1439) and Cassandra (1441). It is remarkable that she is silent concerning the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, her strongest plea. The poet, by laying bare her baser motives at this crisis, seems to imply that these were the deeper springs of her conduct.⁹²⁶ The language is founded partly on a proverbial saying, which, as quoted by a scholiast, runs: "tears are wasted on a fool as on a tomb."⁹³⁴ Orestes is called the 'eye of the house,' a variation of the Homeric 'light,' signifying hope or salvation. — Verrall conjectures that during the following interval Orestes and his company are supposed to have overcome the guards, and that the women when they return have put on festive attire instead of their dark robes (11), as the loyal citizens, held down by the tyrants, are at last triumphant (cf. 864). But the fighting, to serve any purpose, must have been prior to the death of Aegisthus.

Fourth Stasimon, 935-972.

⁹⁴² ff. and ⁹⁶² ff. These strophes, which have a specially triumphal character, were probably sung by the whole Chorus; but the structure is rendered uncertain by the corrupt state of the text.⁹⁴⁷ The lord of stratagems is Hermes.⁹⁵¹ Diké (Justice) is treated as an abbreviation for 'Dios Koré,' *i.e.* maid of Zeus (see Verrall's note), and this is regarded as a revelation or divination of the true name, as in the case of 'Helena' (*Agam.* 686). In the Hesiodic *Theogony*, 901,

she is the child of Themis, who is daughter of Zeus, but Aeschylus is careless respecting such details. Cf. *Eumen.* 3. ⁹⁶⁹ A familiar metaphor (e.g. *Agam.* 33). Compare the homely Shaksperian phrase, 'the whirling of time.'

Exodus, 973-1062.

Orestes enters from the left door, as Clytemnestra from the right in the corresponding scene of the Agamemnon (1372). The corpses are either discovered as there by the withdrawal of a curtain, or carried out side by side on a bier by the attendants, whom Orestes presently (991) calls upon to unfold the fatal robe. ⁹⁷⁹ As they conspired to kill Agamemnon, so they have died together as though bound by oath. A line preceding this appears to be an explanatory gloss. ⁹⁸² It was made without outlet (*Agam.* 1382) and thrown over him as he stepped out of the bath so as to link hands and feet together. The descriptive passage following is wrongly placed in the MSS. after 1004, making it refer to Clytemnestra herself! ⁹⁹⁵ The sun is often called to witness as beholding everything on earth (Homer, *Il.* iii. 277). The poets were aware of a tradition which identified him with Apollo, and use it occasionally to dignify Helios, e.g. *Sept. c. Theb.* 844 and Eurip. (fragm.): "O beauteous beaming Helios . . ., thou art rightly called Apollo among men." This is of course precluded here and wherever Apollo has to be thought of in his own distinctive character. Orestes is unconscious that a greater than the Sun-god is to appear as his witness, *Eumen.* 576. ⁹⁹⁸ The law, according to Demosthenes, gave a right of summary vengeance on the adulterer to the husband, son,

brother, or father of the woman. ¹⁰⁰² According to Aristotle, it was said in Thessaly that there was a snake called the 'sacred,' whose touch was venomous as well as its bite. The viper and lamprey (sea-eel) are coupled by Aristophanes, *Ran.* 473. There was a popular notion that they paired, and that, when this happened, the one killed the other; hence the grim suggestiveness of the simile. The whole speech is designed to show the gradual and fitful approach of madness. After the cold, calm irony of the beginning (973 ff.) Orestes loses himself. Then comes a brief respite, when his rage gives way to tears (1010). Again he feels his brain reeling (1021), but quieted by the thought of the oracle, he once more masters himself and pronounces his own justification in set terms (1026). His last thought, like Cassandra's, is for his good name (1042); the words are on his lips, when the hallucination of the Furies' pursuit comes upon him. ¹⁰¹¹ It is clear from this that, according to Aeschylus, a sword was used; whereas Sophocles (*Elect.* 99) and Euripides (*Hec.* 1261) allude expressly to an axe as the instrument of the murder. But Aeschylus appears to recognise the axe also in the phrase 'a two-edged weapon' (1496), and Cassandra, though she speaks of a sword (1262), apprehends for herself at least a 'forked blade' (114) and a death upon the block (1277), like the death of an ox, the ordinary sacrificial implement being the axe. It seems, therefore, necessary to suppose that Clytemnestra employed both, and we may read her account of the scene in this sense: she began by felling Agamemnon, while he was entangled in the robe, with two blows of an axe, and dealt a third stroke, as he lay prostrate, with a sword lent for the

purpose by Aegisthus in order that he, as the avenger of his father, might have a direct hand in the deed. See *Classical Rev.* xii. ¹⁰¹⁴ That is, Agamemnon (cf. l. 8). The dead is nearer now that his blood has been discovered; it is not too late to reach him by words of warning, which should have been spoken before the soul was released by fire. ¹⁰²⁰ Lit. 'philtre' (love-charm); the use of such charms must have been common, to judge from the frequency of the metaphor in the tragedians and Pindar. ¹⁰³⁵ Cf. *Agam.* 494. Orestes is not yet crowned with laurel, but as a humble suppliant carries a branch of olive with a fillet of wool tied round it (cf. *Eumen.* 43, *Soph. Oed. R.* 3). ¹⁰³⁷ The fire in the sanctuary of Delphi, which was never extinguished. The Delphic temple, like that of Vesta at Rome, contained a 'hearth' (*hestia*), on which the fire was kept continually burning, a relic of a religion earlier than the special cult of Apollo. The 'hearth' is described by Pausanias as in the outer sanctuary near the *omphalos* (*Eumen.* 40). ¹⁰³⁸ From the Homeric age downwards banishment was the penalty for murder; compare the description, *Il.* xxiv. 479 ff. ¹⁰⁴⁵ The word specially denotes omens conveyed by the tongue. There was a bad omen in Orestes' allusion to his death. ¹⁰⁶⁷ The epithet is formed from *gon-* ('child') with the usual termination denoting a wind. It may perhaps signify the 'offspring' in a special sense of Typhoeus and Gaia; compare 'giant' (*Agam.* 692) applied to Zephyros in the sense of earth-sprung, and consequently violent.

EUMENIDES

Prologue, 1-63.

THE background is the same as before, but is now understood to represent the outer wall of the adytum of the Delphic temple, and subsequently that of the temple of Athena Polias. It may be conjectured that the central and widest door (not, perhaps, used in the first two plays) was covered with a curtain, in front of which the priestess spoke her exordium; this being withdrawn (64) as Apollo enters, the *omphalos* is shown, indicating the interior, with Orestes and some (probably three) of the Furies couched around; after the awakening (140) these come out and the rest follow, taking part in the choral song.

¹⁻³³ In this solemn exordium the history of the oracle is ingeniously adapted to the poet's purpose, which is to exalt the authority of Apollo, the patron of Orestes. Hence he sets aside the common story that Apollo wrested the oracle from its first occupant, Gaia (Earth), when he slew the dragon which guarded it. This was the popular tradition; it is adopted by Euripides (*Iphig. in Taur.* 1249 ff.) and Pindar. Aeschylus, on the contrary, does not even allow a breach in the succession, but introduces between Themis and Apollo Phoebe (a daughter of Gaia and Coeus, Hesiod, *Theog.* 406), whom he supposes to have held the oracle for a time and presented it to Phoebus,

the son of her daughter Leto, who is thus made the legitimate successor. ² This ascription was doubly justified. First, the Earth-spirit (Gaia) was naturally supposed to receive the secrets of the Underworld through her caves and chasms; many of these were haunted by dead 'heroes,' who had been seers among the living (*e.g.* Teiresias) or otherwise possessed the prophetic faculty. At Delphi the same connection was suggested by the mysterious chasm, with its mephitic exhalation causing the prophetic trance. Hence the Delphians themselves held that the oracle once belonged to Gaia, as Pausanias was informed (x. 5, 5). Secondly, in the Hesiodic *Theogony*, which Aeschylus closely studied, Gaia has a special prophetic office, in addition to the dignity belonging to her as the parent with Ouranos of the older or Titan powers. This is manifest throughout the conflicts which led ultimately to the enthronement of Zeus. It was from her, too, that Prometheus had the secret of the fate impending over that god (*Prom. V.* 209). ³ This is inconsistent with the poet's surmise in another place (*Prom. V.* 209), that Earth and Themis are two names of the same goddess. Cf. *Choeph.* 951. ⁷ The double name 'Phoibos Apollon' points to the blending of an earlier with a later cult. The former word was associated with purity as well as with divine possession, and there is evidence that it had originally a larger and less personal application; *e.g.* Cassandra is called a 'Phoibas.' Cf. *Choeph.* 32. If we assume a primitive pre-Apolline cult, in which rites of purifying went with divination, and women were ministrants, as in the ancient German religion and in the worship of Vesta, there may be a real significance in the relationship here assigned

to 'Phoebe.' Miss J. E. Harrison (J. H. S. xix. 2, 'Delphika') regards her as having been an ancillary Earth-Spirit, the 'daughter' of Gaia in the same sense in which Persephone was daughter of Demeter. (Cf. *Choeph.* 32.) But her presidency at Delphi is merely an invention, for which the poet finds a plausible ground in the two names, assuming that something analogous to the Athenian family customs obtained in Olympus. At Athens a newborn child, having first been 'carried round' the hearth, and so admitted to communion with the household gods, received from his father the family name, and with it 'birth-day' gifts, the first festival (*amphidromia*) taking place on the fifth or seventh day, the second on the tenth day after birth; and the name was, as a rule, that of the child's grandfather. Thus, if Phoebus was named after Phoebe, it would be appropriate for her to make him a present of the oracle. ⁹ The 'lake' is a round tarn, which supplied water to Apollo's temple in the island. In the Homeric hymn to the Pythian Apollo, Delos represents the god as deserting her (though he had a temple there) because of her ruggedness. Here too the word used implies a rugged or 'ridgy' island. ¹⁰ Pallas stands for Athens or Attica. The god's route is differently traced in Pindar, viz., from Tanagra in Boeotia. ¹³ The Athenians are so designated, because Ericthonius, the mythic king of Athens, was made in local legends the son of Hephaestus, to account for his being worshipped at Athens along with Athena. The term has also a metaphorical application to the road-makers as such, since the god was the father of mechanical inventions. ¹⁴ The description refers to,

and is designed to explain a curious ceremony. When deputies were sent from Athens to Delphi on a sacred embassy, they were preceded by men carrying axes in memory of the making of the pilgrims' road. The poet connects this with the god's journey through Attica. ¹⁶ Delphus, the eponymous king of Delphi, was son of Poseidon by Melaina, whose mother Melantho was daughter of Deucalion. ²¹ She is so named as having a shrine 'before the temple' (of Apollo). But in the time of Demosthenes the title was confounded with Pronoia (Forethought); so Pausanias has it. ²³ Pan especially frequented this great cave (Pausan. x. 32, 7), which was high up on Parnassus. It was large enough to give shelter to a multitude of fugitives during the Persian war (Herod. viii. 36). Mysterious moving lights were said to appear in it, when the nymphs joined in the rout of Dionysus (Soph. *Antig.* 1126). Cf. Eurip. *Bacch.* 306 ff. ²⁴ A name of Dionysus, derived from the noise (*bromos*) of his rout. ²⁶ Torn to pieces by his mother Agave, as a hare is killed by dogs. The scene of this event was Cithaeron according to the Theban tradition, which Aeschylus followed in a tragedy on this theme, entitled 'Xantriae.' From Cithaeron the god travelled to Parnassus. ²⁷ This stream (now Xeropotamos) rose near the Corycian cave, whose nymphs were sometimes called 'daughters of Pleistus.' Poseidon had an altar in the Delphic temple, and there was a tradition, according to Pausanias, that he once had a share in the oracle but exchanged it for Calauria: the remains of his temple on that island were discovered by Chandler in 1765. ²⁸ See note on *Agam.* 972. Zeus was represented in

the temple by a statue, near which were images of two Moirai (Fates), whose 'leader' he was called (Moiragetes), and one of Apollo with the same appellation. This serves to illustrate the Hellenic conception of 'fate' as order, subject to the guiding will of Zeus (cf. *Choeph.* 306, 647), of which the oracle itself was a practical application. ²⁹ That is, a slab laid on the gilded wooden tripod [see illustration], placed over a fissure in the rocky foundation of the adytum or inner sanctuary. This must have been invisible or at least at some depth below the paved floor, where the interpreters (*prophetae*) sat listening to the utterances of the priestess, which they converted into oracles. From the time when the oracle began to be regularly frequented, there were two priestesses, who served alternately, and a third kept in reserve. The Pythoness fasted for three days previously and bathed in the Castalian stream. Before taking her seat she drank water from the sacred spring Cassotis. In order to place herself under Apollo's influence, she chewed bay-leaves and held a branch of bay in her hand; she also threw bay-leaves with barley-meal on an altar in the adytum, kindled with pinewood, by which was a golden statue of the god. The vapour from the chasm was so powerful as sometimes to cause delirium and death. ³² The balloting was conducted by Delphian officials. The formula is thus quoted: "O Chance and Loxias, to which of these dost thou give the right?" The Delphian nobles were appointed by lot to their office of presiding 'by the tripod' (Eurip. *Ion.* 416 ff.). Though the oracle was open to all the world, the Greeks had precedence over foreigners, and a privilege (*promanteia*) was sometimes

given to a particular person or state. The management of the temple and the oracle belonged chiefly to the heads of five Delphian families, specially consecrated (*Hosioi*) and tracing their lineage to Deucalion, whose legend was locally connected with this region of Greece. These high nobles (called the Pythian 'lords' and 'kings,' Eurip. *Ion*. 1219, 1222) were the 'prophets' (*ib.* 413) and the real authors of the oracles. The priestess passes through the central door, and re-enters after a pause. ³⁸ At first young maidens were employed, but subsequently the priestesses were elderly women (not less than fifty years of age), usually chosen from poor families in the country. ³⁹ The woollen fillets or branches wreathed with wool, with which the adytum was hung (like the augural station of Teiresias, Eurip. *Bacch.* 251), were so distinctive that they sometimes stand for the shrine itself (Arist. *Plut.* 39). The branch of olive or laurel with this appendage (*stemma*) marked the suppliant; hence Orestes carried it as one suing for absolution (*Choeph.* 1035). These were, as a rule, laid on the altar (but taken away, if the prayer was granted, Soph. *Oed. R.* 142). The omphalos served the same purpose, being regarded as an altar. Orestes is accordingly represented in an Apulian vase-painting seated on its base, and his woollen fillet is wreathed on the stone. The *stemma* specially associated with Delphi was formed of tufts of laurel tied with threads of red wool with a tassel (*sillubos*) at either end. ⁴⁰ The word commonly denoted the metal boss in the centre of a shield; it is applied figuratively in Homer to Calypso's island standing out like a shield-boss amid the expanse of ocean. However it came to be used of the conical

stone at Delphi, the word in that connection suggested the idea that the altar marked the centre of the earth, and this took shape in the legend that Zeus guided Heracles to discover the spot by two eagles which met there, flying from east and west; the birds were figured in gold on the omphalos. An altar of such peculiar shape must have been modelled on something that preceded it in the local cult. This may have been a sacred 'black stone' of the kind called 'baitulos,' a word derived from the Semitic (*bêth-ûll*, cf. *Gen.* xxviii. 18). There was such a stone preserved in the temple; it was anointed daily and swathed in wool on holy days. It appears in the story of Kronos according to Hesiod (*Theog.* 453 ff.), as the stone which was given him by Rhea to swallow in place of the infant Zeus, and was afterwards "set fast at Pytho for a sign" by Zeus himself. Hence, if Rhea is another name for the old Earth-goddess, it may be inferred that this was a fetish-stone which had belonged either to her or to Kronos, supposing him to have been a sky-god; such stones were really meteorites and the god would naturally be said to disgorge them, while the swathed stone would suggest an infant: cf. 'The Greek Epic,' p. 274. Miss Harrison, l.c., adopting (in place of the usual explanation of the word as akin to the Latin *umbilicus*, 'navel') another derivation, viz., from *omphê* ('voice'), conjectures that the shape was adapted from that of the grave-mound (which was made more durable and conspicuous by stuccoing it white) or the conical ('bee-hive') tomb, which was of much the same form, and that it was 'vocal' or oracular as being haunted by the prophetic spirits of the earth; for Gaia, it was said, even after her dispossession,

continued to send up 'dreams' (that is, dream-oracles), cf. Eurip. *Iph. T.* 1260 ff. The altar is here described as within the adytum, but it had been transferred to the outer part of the *naos* when Pausanias visited the place. ⁴⁸ The portraiture is meant partly to recall the Homeric Gorgon, as she appears 'frightful and grisly' on the aegis of Athene (*Il.* v. 741) and the shield of Agamemnon (*ib.* xi. 36). But she had no snakes about her head, belonging as she did to the celestial and not to the infernal region; the winged horse Pegasus, which sprang from Medusa's body, carried the thunder and lightning for Zeus, and her two immortal sisters had their abode beyond Ocean. Aeschylus, however, gave 'snaky' hair to them as to the Erinyes. ⁵⁰ That is, the Harpies. Their name ('snatchers') obviously lent itself to a variety of allegorical conceptions. In Homer they are spirits of the storm (*Od.* i. 241) with a vague office of 'snatching,' but associated in some degree with death, e.g. *Od.* xx. 66, they carry off the daughters of Pandareus and give them as handmaids to the Erinyes. As messengers of death they appear on funereal monuments (such as the so-called 'Harpy tomb' in the British Museum) with winged bodies but human heads (they are 'fair-haired,' Hesiod, *Theog.* 265 ff.). A later representation, from which Aeschylus here borrows, degraded them to birds of prey. As such they were sent to punish Phineus, king of Thrace, for blinding his daughters. The features of resemblance here are the visage with its repulsive hungry look and the foul rheum, which is described (probably from a picture) by Vergil (*Aen.* iii. 212) as polluting the viands which they snatched. ⁵¹ The Aeschylean Furies need nothing

to aid their terrific strength of limb. The other and weaker conception—the winged Fury—appears in Euripides (*Orest.* 317), and in late Greek or Etruscan art. Thanatos (Death) likewise has black wings, *Alcest.* 24. Otherwise wings go either with the bird-form (*e.g.* the Harpy and Siren) or with such a figure as Niké (Victory), who is regarded as a celestial messenger flying to crown the victor. ⁵³ Lit. ‘unapproachable’; their breath poisons the air and blights the victim. Vulg. ‘not moulded,’ *i.e.* they are real, not statues. ⁵⁴ This suggests, not sacrificial offerings of blood like that which Thanatos drinks (*Alcest.* 845, 851), but the very blood of the human victim, on which the Erinyes feasts instead (138, 254, 265). The bloodshot eyes were more terrible in contrast with the pallor of the face, which is noticed by Aristophanes, *Plut.* 418 f. From his burlesque allusions (*ib.* 425) we gather that the Furies carried torches, which now smoulder while they sleep. ⁵⁵ Their dress is dark (*Choeph.* 1049), dull grey or bluish black (352). Their girdles, which Strabo notices (iii. 175), may have been scarlet, judging from a description given by Diogenes Laertius (vi. 102) of an eccentric Cynic, who went about in the dress of the Furies, saying that he had been sent from Hades to report on the sins of men. The images in temples were draped on high festivals, especially the ancient seated figures, on whose knees it was convenient to lay a robe (*peplos*). It was a rule that this should be of the best and new once a year, so that the Furies’ squalid garb might well be regarded as an affront. ⁶² So in Aristoph., *Plut.* ii., Apollo is called ‘wise physician and seer.’ The two arts, whose combination, in the person of the ‘medicine man,’

goes with the lowest stage or civilisation (cf. *Agam.* 1622), were ostensibly united in Apollo, since Asclepius, the eponymous patron of the medical guilds, nominally derived his distinction from the Delphic god, his supposed father. We find much the same functions combined in Epimenides of Crete, a seer versed especially in the ritual of purification; he is, perhaps, the Cretan 'prophet' quoted in the Epistle of Paul to Titus, i. 12. The name Loxias is used of Apollo as the god of oracles, and generally as the embodiment of the sacred law, which dealt with religious offences by corresponding means of expiation and absolution. The derivation is uncertain; Fröhde explains the word through Sanscr. *lakshā* as meaning one who 'indicates,' the god of 'signs.'

First Episode, 64-163.

⁶⁹ That is, no monster such as the Kentaurs, whose other name was the 'brutes' (*pheres*, Aeol.). ⁸⁰ The ancient wooden image (*xoanon*), made from the sacred olive, and doubly venerable from its antiquity; for the temple in which it was kept is mentioned in Homer with the 'house of Erectheus' (*Il.* ii. 557 ff., *Od.* vii. 81 ff.). During the Persian occupation it was removed for safety to Salamis; subsequently it was preserved in the restored temple of Athena Polias and afterwards in the new Erectheion. Pausanias, describing the latter (i. 26, 6), notices a tradition that the image 'fell from heaven,' due merely to a confusion with the rude unshapen 'betyls.' He does not appear to have seen it, but he observed not far from the same place a seated figure of the goddess dedicated by Callias

and made by Endoeus, an Athenian sculptor of the school whose traditional founder was the Cretan Daedalus: the same artist made a similar one for the Athenian colony of Erythrae, with a high cap (*polos*), and a distaff in each hand. A marble statue recently discovered on the Acropolis (now in the Acropolis Museum) corresponds in its archaic character with the time (about B.C. 550), and may possibly be the one which he noticed: the stiff modelling of the body with the ribbed chiton closely adhering is in the style derived from early wood-carving, though there is an approach to the freer manner in the treatment of the legs. The same type is repeated in several small votive images of terra-cotta. The old image was, in all probability, of the same design, but without the aegis; this was borrowed from the later or armed Athena Promachos ['the Champion'], with whom the homely type of Athena Polias had nothing in common. In the festive procession, as old as Homer (*Il.* l.c.), a *peplos* was carried to the temple and laid on the knees of the statue; the Homeric poet imagines such a seated figure of the goddess at Troy and a similar procession of women, headed by her priestess (*Il.* vi. 92).⁸⁹ The brotherly affection between the two gods is illustrated in the Homeric hymn (iii. 524 ff.), where Apollo condones the theft of his oxen, and, delighted with Hermes' inventions, the lute and the syrinx, declares a 'league of amity.' Here the bond of a common male parentage is dwelt on as the strongest tie uniting them.⁹¹ Compare the last scene in Aristoph. *Plutus*, where Hermes pleads for himself under the equivalent title of *hegemon* (leader). As such he required a sacrifice from the Athenian general before marching. In the Homeric

poems he guides Odysseus to Circe's palace and Priam to the tent of Achilles. ⁹³ As guide of suppliants Hermes acts for Zeus, their special protector (Soph. *Philoct.* 484).—Apollo retires into the temple; Orestes departs with Hermes. Clytemnestra enters through the trap-door (*anapiesma*) by the so-called 'Charon's ladder,' leading out upon the stage or into the orchestra from underneath; such a contrivance was indispensable for personages supposed to emerge from the lower world, as here and in the *Persians*, where the ghost of Dareios appears. (See A. Müller, *Griech. Bühnenalterthümer*, p. 149 f.) ¹⁰⁵ The mind has a clearer outlook in sleep, a 'prospect' which is denied to waking mortality. This sententious 'aside,' with which Clytemnestra's speech is strangely interrupted, may be an echo of some philosophical doctrine. Pythagoras and Plato after him (*Rep.* ix. init.) insisted on the value of abstinence before sleep as conducing to pure and *true* dreams (cf. Cicero, *de Divin.* i. 29). The subject of divination in sleep was treated by Aristotle in connection with his theory of the soul. His view and that of the Peripatetic school, as it is recorded by Aelian, *Var. Hist.* iii. 11, quite correspond with the poet's: they explained visions as due to the clearness of the mental perception in sleep, when the soul, being collected ('sphered') in its own seat (the breast) and freed from its service to the body, acquires a certain power of divination (Cicero, *l.c.* 30). The same belief may be traced under other aspects (*Agam.* 180, *Choeph.* 288). ¹⁰⁷ She had repeatedly sacrificed to the Erinyes of her murdered husband in the hope of appeasing them. The drink-offerings consisted only of pure spring water and honey mingled with water or milk.

In Sophocles' detailed description of Oedipus in the grove of the Eumenides (*Oed. Col.* 478 ff.) a libation of water is poured from two bowls in succession, and then a third bowl containing water sweetened with honey is emptied on the earth. Wine was offered in addition to the dead (*Eurip. Orest.* 160 ff., cf. *Iphig. in Taur.* 160 ff.). ¹⁰⁸ Sacrificial cakes (*ompne*) of meal and honey are mentioned (*Callim. fr.* 123) as offered by the Hesychides, the Athenian priestesses of the Eumenides, and burnt in their service. The burnt-offerings of meat (1006), which are to accompany their installation, are not part of the regular ritual. ¹¹⁷ These are the only marginal stage-directions extant in any Greek tragedy. ¹²⁷ The Greek word means a serpent; it stands, therefore, as evidence for the primitive association of these spirits with the tomb, underlying the other conception of the incarnate curse. ¹³⁹ After Clytemnestra has retired, the three (?) Furies awaken one another and emerge together, while the rest follow in succession.

Parodus, 143-178.

Wecklein points out the elaborate and striking assonance in the dochmiac lines; this implies strong dramatic emphasis in the chanting. The translation here roughly follows the rhythms of the original. ¹⁶⁴ The 'throne' (seat) is the omphalos itself, whether regarded as the seat of the suppliant or as that of the god. Röhde ('Psyche') would trace the altar itself to the primitive conception of a seat where the god receives his worshippers. ¹⁶⁵ The description is not merely metaphorical; from its prominent position

and importance the omphalos may be supposed to have rested on a base, and it is so represented in vase-paintings. ¹⁷⁴ An allusion to the exemption of Admetus from death contrived by Apollo, and the subsequent rescue of Alcestis, which the Erinyes resented as an insult to the Fates, their sisters (961). Cf. 724.

Second Episode, 179-254.

¹⁸² Among other examples of an arrow compared with a serpent is one quoted by J. F. Boyes ('Illustrations of Aeschylus and Sophocles') from the Anglo-Saxon poem of Judith: "They then speedily | let fly forth | showers of arrows, | serpents of Hilda." It was conjectured by Feuerbach that the 'Belve-dere' Apollo of the Vatican represented the god in this scene putting the Furies to flight. But the Greek original, of which this and the Stroganoff Apollo are copies, was certainly of the Hellenistic age, when the interest in the older Greek tragedy had declined. It is known, on the other hand, from Pausanias, that a statue of Apollo was consecrated in the Delphic temple to commemorate the defeat of the Gauls or Galatians, who marched against Delphi and were driven back by a thunderstorm aiding the defenders. It is likely that the original bronze recorded this historical event; the god may have held the aegis (not a bow) in his left hand, and a stemma, suggesting the temple, in the other. ¹⁸⁶ This scathing speech—strangely misapplied as it is to the Erinyes—is of historical interest as a denunciation of Asiatic barbarism. Beheading is mentioned by Herodotus, *e.g.* as a penalty inflicted on the

unsuccessful general. We have visible evidence in the Assyrian bas-reliefs that prisoners of war were subjected to death by impalement (190). Hacking off the hands and feet is the same atrocity with which Clytemnestra is charged (*Choeph.* 439), but it appears here as a form of punishment. The making of eunuchs (188) is an institution which prevailed in Lydia as well as in Persia (Herod. i. 270, ii. 245). ¹⁹² To the Greek perception, an ugly face or figure in itself suggested brutal traits of character. So Hephaestus reproaches Kratos, the giant sent to bind Prometheus (*Prom. V.* 78): "thy tongue declares thee cruel as thy form." Cf. Shakspeare, *Tempest*, v. 1, of Caliban: "He is as disproportioned in his manners | As in his shape." ¹⁹⁷ Apollo himself had kept flocks (for Admetus). ²¹⁴ Hera was worshipped as *teleia*, or guardian of the nuptial rite (*telos*), which was consecrated by her own union with Zeus, known as the 'sacred marriage.' Apart from this Olympian sanction, the Athenians regarded monogamy as having been established for themselves by Cecrops, the mythical founder of the city (Athen. xiii. 555 D.). ²¹⁷ Against the claim of blood-relationship Apollo advances that of marriage, as being at least part of the world's 'order,' denoted by the abstract names 'Fate' (Moirai) and 'Justice.' It is therefore more divine, at any rate, than a human covenant between man and man, which is merely 'witnessed' by the gods, and which Zeus can overrule, for "he is mightier than an oath" (621). ²²¹ The term properly belongs to the avenger deputed by the kin to 'hunt' the murderer under the old rule of private revenge.

Apollo and the Chorus retire (234). The action is

now transferred to the temple of Athena Polias at Athens, the change being indicated by placing the image of the goddess in front (259).

²³⁷ During the long period intervening Orestes, though he had undergone purification at Delphi, has wandered 'over land and sea,' seeking absolution at different shrines of repute and paying the homicide's penalty of banishment: in Euripides' version (*Iphig. in Taur.*) he is hunted as far as the Crimea. He is no longer a bloodguilty or unshriven penitent (*prostropaios*). Yet the Erinyes still scent his mother's blood, and their contention is that nothing can effectually remove the stain.

Epiparodus, 255-275.

The Furies re-enter in detachments as in the first parodus. According to Wecklein, they are arranged in two divisions of six, the leader first speaks alone, and the first half-Chorus respond collectively; then the six members of the second half-Chorus follow, chanting in succession. ²⁷² Hades (the god) is the recorder and judge of those sins (sacrilege, perjury, breach of hospitality or filial duty) which strike at the root of human society. The Erinyes are his assessors, apart from their special office in connection with bloodshed.

Third Episode, 276-306.

²⁷⁸ A polluted person was excommunicated for fear of bringing the curse upon others, which might be done (according to the scholiast) even by a look or word. Orestes was under such a ban while on his way to Delphi, and had kept the rule of silence till

he was purified there. The poet introduced Telephus in his 'Mysians' going speechless on his way from Tegea, as a homicide. Euripides (*Iphig. in Taur.* 947 ff.) makes the silence of Orestes serve to explain a peculiar Athenian usage, viz., the drinking from separate cups at the festival of the 'Choes.' (See Miss Harrison, *J. H. S.* xx. p. 110 f.)²⁸³ Similar virtue was ascribed to this in Rome as an antidote to madness (Plautus, *Menaech.* ii. 2). But here it must be connected with the use of the same victim in the mysteries (cf. Aristoph. *Ach.* 787, *Pax* 373), and for the lustration (*peristia*) of the Athenian ecclesia: the place of meeting was called the 'purified ground,' *Ach.* 44. A weanling was required as being untainted; so in the case of dogs offered to Hecate. Cf. 450.²⁸⁶ Or 'cleanses,' but the line is, perhaps, an interpolated maxim.²⁹⁰ Cf. 670 ff., 764 ff. A direct political reference rare in Greek tragedy. A treaty had been concluded between Argos and Athens, B.C. 459, the year before the performance of the Trilogy, and it was accepted by the aristocratic party. Apart from the immediate motive, it was natural for the poet, adopting the legend of Orestes' visit to Athens, to dwell on the friendship between the two cities. Now that political events drew them closely together, the legend might appear in a sense prophetic.²⁹⁴ A picturesque description clearly suggested by the disposition of drapery on the feet of a seated figure, such as was, probably, the ancient image of Athena Polias. The 'erect step,' on the other hand, points to the attitude seen in the illustration and familiar in Panatheniac vases, where the left foot is straight before the right.—There was a strange legend of Athena's

birth which localised it by the lake Tritonis (now Lowdeah) in Libya (Herod. iv. 180), where the natives identified a goddess of their own with her. The local tradition, according to Herodotus, made her the daughter of the lake (cf. her Homeric epithet Tritogeneia, 'Trito-born,' and Poseidon, and only the adoptive child of Zeus. This becomes still more strange when coupled with the story of her birth from the head of Zeus (667 f.). There is, however, a political motive in this allusion also. The Athenians had recently (B.C. 460) sent a fleet to aid Inarus, one of the Libyan vassals of Persia, in a revolt against his suzerain (Thucyd. i. 104 ff.). Hence the goddess is described as championing her friends. ²⁹⁵ As though she were again marshalling the gods to battle against the giants, cf. Pindar, *Nem.* i. 100. The scene of the Gigantomachia was laid by Pindar, and probably by Aeschylus, at the plain called Phlegraean ('fiery'), which formed part of Pallene in the Chalcidic peninsula. ³⁰² This line will bear another rendering: 'bloodless victim, scared at a shadow' [R. Shilleto]. ³⁰⁵ A metaphor derived from the criminals who, at Athens, were 'kept' at public expense to be put to death in atonement for the sins of the people. ³⁰⁶ Lit. 'hymn of binding,' that is, devoting to the infernal gods, like the incantation (*katadesis*) employed against an enemy. The recurring refrain is characteristic of a magic song.

First Stasimon, 307-396.

The opening passage is in the marching (anapaestic) measure, recited by the leader, while the sections range themselves together. The refrain (marked in

the translation by rhyme) was probably sung by the full Chorus. ³²² The parentage of the Erinyes was assigned by a more definite genealogical tradition to Earth (Hesiod, *Theog.* 185). This would hardly have accorded with the scheme adopted by Aeschylus in the prologue, which affiliated Apollo, the enemy of the Erinyes, through Leto and Phoebe, to Gaia. Hence he falls back on Night, a being gendered, according to Hesiod, along with Earth out of Chaos. Sophocles restored Earth to her proper place and converted the mother 'Night' into a father 'Darkness' (Skotos), *Oed. Col.* 40, 106. ³²³ One of the names of the Erinyes is used to describe their office, viz., Poina (penalty, payment), because they exact the penalty for blood. ³³⁰ Cf. Shakspeare, *Hamlet*, iii. 1, "like sweet bells jangled." The burden of this 'binding' hymn is madness, of which the poet conceives as a whirling and dancing of the brain (*Choeph.* 1022 ff.), answering to the terrible dance of the Erinyes (376). Their persecution does not represent remorse, which Orestes did not feel, but a physical disease allied to the leprosy and other plagues ascribed to them, and connected perhaps with their sucking of the blood from the body. Modern science, which substitutes the brain for the indefinite seat of thought (*phrenes*), has established that cerebral anaemia is among the causes of insane delusions. The epithet applied to the hymn means literally 'without the lyre' (*phorminx*), which may imply the converse accompaniment of the flute and the Phrygian mode, as Drake suggests. The latter was either doleful or exciting and tumultuous, unlike the calm and grave tones of the lyre. ³³⁵ An 'allotment' of offices and dignities was first made for

the older 'Titan' dynasty, and this was not disturbed by Zeus. He was careful to confirm the old order. See Hesiod, *Theog.* 421-5 (of Hecate), cf. *Prom. V.* 244. ³⁵² The white linen robe (*pharos*) was associated with solemn festivals, just as the long linen tunic called 'Ionian' remained in use for ceremonial occasions. ³⁶² The sense of this difficult passage appears to be: "we are concerned to bar the gods' authority in prayers addressed to us, and so avoid all quarrel with them." ³⁸¹ This sense is conveyed with simple solemnity in the Greek: "it (our law) abides." ³⁸⁷ We are reminded of Dante's *Inferno* by this conception of a region which is made 'steep and rugged' for the sinner by the Furies always on his track.

Fourth Episode, 397-489.

Athena enters walking (L.) and retires at the close of the scene on her way to the city, where she appears in the next scene assembling the court.

³⁹⁸ Sigeion, a town of the Troad, the possession of which was long disputed between Athens and the Aeolians of Mitylene. According to a scholiast, this is another allusion with a political motive; the poet is urging the Athenians to reassert their claim to the place, which the Mitylenaeans had won in a previous war by a duel, in which their champion was victorious. It appears, however, that it had belonged to Athens from the time (about a hundred years before the date of the play) when Peisistratus took it (*Herod. v.* 95). The poet merely gives a realistic colour to the scene by recalling a legend engrafted in the interest of Athens on the Trojan epic, to the effect that Athena

had received Sigeion in trust for Acamas and Demophon, the sons of Theseus, after the conquest of Troy. These heroes do not appear in the *Iliad*, where Athens is insignificant; they were introduced in the *Little Iliad* of Lesches. Colonists occupying a new site set apart a portion for a temple in honour of their patron god, and where there had been a military conquest, this was regarded as equivalent to the gift of a 'choice portion' of the spoils to the king in the heroic times. There was a temple of Athena on the promontory by Sigeion, dedicated by the Athenian colonists.⁴⁰⁵ The description of the goddess 'plying unwearied feet' shows that the chariot is only a fanciful and somewhat ludicrous metaphor for the aegis carrying her along. (But the line describing it may have been interpolated for a later performance, when the *mechané* was employed.) The earlier conception of the aegis as a lightning-like shield (*Il.* xv. 307) had given place to that of a mantle (goatskin) draped round the shoulders, to which the Gorgon's head was attached.⁴¹⁷ This name (lit. 'imprecations') suggests the personified curse, as an early conception of the Erinyes; so the plural is used, *Il.* xix. 87. The word, however, at a still earlier stage, had probably a closer association with the Underworld: Fick, deriving it from *eri(v)*, 'to be wroth,' suggests that it was originally an epithet of Demeter, while Miss Harrison ('Delphika') thinks it denoted simply the jealous or offended ghost.⁴²⁹ This scene represents the preliminary hearing (*anakrasis*, *prodikasia*), which was commenced by a mutual challenge (*proklesis*) by the plaintiff and defendant, who thus made a sworn declaration of good faith before the evidence was heard. At this stage the prosecutors

complain that Orestes will neither deny their charge on oath nor challenge them to swear to the justice of it. He refuses on the ground that the challenge does not cover his plea, which is that of a justifying motive. But, as Wecklein observes, "the Erinyes as Titanic nature-powers concern themselves only with the deed, not with the motives." ⁴³³ The defendant was entitled to protest, on grounds set forth in an affidavit (*paragraphe*), against the hearing of the case, which was otherwise proceeded with 'directly,' without a preliminary argument on the point of law. Athena is asked to assume from Orestes' silence that he has no initial protest to make, and to proceed to take the evidence. ⁴⁴¹ Before the Apolline rites of absolution had been instituted, Ixion, king of the Lapithae or Phlegyes, the first man guilty of slaying a kinsman (Deïoneus), sued to Zeus as the god of suppliants (*hikesios*) and was purified by him. Zeus, therefore, could be regarded as the first founder of these rites, and the 'purifier' in chief (*katharsios*, Herod. i. 44). From this point of view, presumably, the story was dramatised by Aeschylus in earlier tragedies, entitled *Ixion* and the *Perrhaibides*. ⁴⁴⁵ Orestes disclaims the comparison between himself and Ixion, who at the time of his suit was bloodguilty. ⁴⁶¹ In the scene following Clytemnestra's death, *Choeph.* 980. ⁴⁸⁹ Athena retires into the temple.

Second Stasimon, 490-565.

⁵⁰⁵ Or 'learn of woe on woe ensuing' (lit. 'the allotment and succession of woes,' R. Shilleto).

⁵²¹ The word has a wide range of meaning:

"modesty, humility, temperance, frugality, obedience, in one word, sobermindedness" (Bishop Porteous).
⁵²⁹ Cf. *Agam.* 389, 477. The same conception meets us in proverbial forms, e.g. "the half is more than the whole" (Hesiod). ⁵³³ Cf. *Agam.* 759 ff. Violence (*hubris*) is the extreme opposite of that self-control and self-respect, which are the obverse of piety and reverence. ⁵⁴⁷ Two of the strictly primitive commandments, derived from the patriarchal age of Greece. ⁵⁴⁹ Cf. Philistus (quoted by Drake): "the just man is not he who doth no wrong, | but he who might do wrong and willeth not." ⁵⁵⁷ A Greek term for the yardarm. ⁵⁶⁰ The divine jealousy (*nemesis*) in a personal form, called up to punish the over-wealthy.—Athena now returns, accompanied by the nobles, who are to form the first council. The scene is now supposed to be changed to the Areiopagos, the background being simply ignored, as in the *Choephoroe* (see note *ad init.*).

Fifth Episode, 566–783.

⁵⁶⁷ The procedure is naturally borrowed from contemporary Athens, where the trumpet was used in convening an extraordinary assembly (*ecclesia*) and at the solemn festival of the 'Choes' (Aristoph. *Acharn.* 1001). The epithet 'Tyrrhene' (*i.e.* Etruscan) is employed, according to poetical usage, to denote excellence; for the Etruscan bronze was celebrated. The earliest notice of the Greek trumpet is in a Homeric simile (*Il.* xviii. 219); it is, however, excluded from the descriptions of battle, where we hear only of the herald's clear voice and the heroic war-cry. ⁵⁷³ Orestes or Apollo, but see note on l. 709.

⁵⁸⁵ A scholiast here states that the chorus in this play numbered fifteen, but the internal evidence is decidedly in favour of twelve, as that number is established for the *Agamemnon* by the twelve speeches of the elders in the scene of the murder (1338 ff.), and we have here a corresponding number of interrogations. Hermann argues, less safely, from the division of the Parodus (140 ff.), that there were seven pairs of voices, which with the leader would give a chorus of fifteen. ⁵⁸⁹ Cf. *Agam.* 171. ⁵⁹⁵ An ironical allusion to Apollo in his office of 'expounder' (*exegetes*) of the ritual and the sacred law (cf. 609). ⁶⁰⁴ In other words, had Agamemnon no Erinyes to avenge him? The poet allows Orestes (*Choeph.* 923) to speak of 'a father's vengeful hounds,' and Sophocles (*Elect.* 490) contemplates them as aiding his deed of retribution. Clytemnestra's offerings imply as much. The reply of the Chorus narrows the office of the Erinyes to the extreme limit, making them responsible only where there is actual consanguinity. ⁶²¹ Cf. 489. Apollo appears to set the sacerdotal above the civil law. Presiding over the former, he claims the right to grant a dispensation from the obligation of a judicial oath. The primitive code made the oath paramount and binding on Zeus himself, but the sacerdotal power set up a law of its own; to rebel against this was 'rebellion against God' (*theomachia*). We have a similar disparagement of the oath as a civil covenant (l. 218). ⁶²⁶ The Homeric view of the sceptre, with special reference to that of Agamemnon with its great tradition (*Il.* ii. 101). ⁶³¹ Or 'right loyal to his own' (see *Classical Rev.* i.). ⁶⁴⁵ The release of Kronos and the Titans was part of the legend on which Aeschylus

founded his Promethean trilogy. ⁶⁵⁶ The washing of hands was the preliminary of every sacrifice. The institution of a cult founded on the *phratría* or clan is here assumed. It is attested for the Homeric age by the description of an outlaw as 'one without clan or law or hearth' (*Il.* ix. 63). In Attica it was highly organised: the citizens were grouped in twelve tribes, each worshipping its own supposed ancestors and holding a festival in common, called the *Apaturia*, in honour of 'common fatherhood.' ⁶⁶⁰ Lit., 'as stranger for stranger,' the term (*xenos*) implying hospitality, but no nearer tie. This is an extreme statement of an opinion which prevailed at Athens especially, and was emphasised there by the social inferiority of the wife. The poet elsewhere (*Suppl.* 256 f.) calls the father the 'male designer,' who puts the stamp (character) on the child, male or female, when it has left the mould, a metaphor from the coin, which ranked in Greece as a precious work of art. Euripides borrows the argument, and puts it in the mouth of Orestes himself (*Orest.* 552, cf. frag. 1048). ⁶⁶⁵ Aeschylus and Pindar follow the tradition recorded in the Hesiodic *Theogony*, that Zeus swallowed his wife, Metis (Counsel), when she was about to bring forth Athena, after which the goddess sprang from his head. Apollo conveniently suppresses the wife. ⁶⁷³ See note on l. 290. ⁶⁸³ Aegeus, father of Theseus, is introduced as a name glorious in Athenian legends; he was the eponymous hero of one of the Attic tribes. ⁶⁸⁶ The story (given in a late epic, entitled *Amazonia* or *Atthis*) was that Theseus had made prisoner and carried off the Amazon Antiope, and her sister warriors invaded Attica for the sake of rescuing her.

The battle was the subject of a painting by Micon in the Stoa Poikilé. ⁶⁸⁹ The Amazons worshipped Ares; their queen, Penthesileia, was his daughter. Another popular etymology explained the name in connection with the trial of Ares. The fortifying of the hill as a counterwork to the Acropolis may have been suggested to the poet by the fact of its occupation by the Persians (Herod. viii. 52). ⁶⁹⁵ An adaptation of a proverb applied to those who 'mingle the fairest with the foulest,' like our saying, 'the corruption of the best is the worst.' ⁷⁰³ Scythia stands for the uncivilised world, the antipodes of Greece, which is represented by the Peloponnese (the part for the whole).—As the passage commencing l. 683 follows somewhat awkwardly in that place, while the inauguration would appropriately come after the opening proclamation (568 ff.), Wecklein conjectures that we have here a later appendix, Athena's abrupt and unanswered question (678) being inserted to lead up to it, and her speech (674 f.) changed to the interrogative form for the same purpose. Supposing, therefore, that the balloting originally began after l. 675, there will be a continuous series of twelve distichs (676 f., 679 f., 711–30), spoken alternately by the Chorus-leader and Apollo, and, as it is probable that the number of the judges was twelve, corresponding with that of the gods who tried Ares (or Orestes, according to another account, Eurip. *Orest.* 1650), Wecklein infers that the votes for conviction were deposited one by one when the former spoke, and those for acquittal during Apollo's replies. ⁷²⁴ Zeus had struck down Asclepios, son of Apollo (see *Agam.* 1022), who in return slew the

Cyclopes, the forgers of the thunder. As an atonement Apollo was bound to service in the house of a mortal, Admetus, son of Pheres. In gratitude for the piety of his host, the god persuaded the Fates, whom he made drunk, to relieve him from dying at his appointed time, on condition that another life was offered for his: the sequel is the subject of the *Alcestis* of Euripides, founded on the legend in the Hesiodic Catalogue. The story, including the drugging of the Fates, was already known through an *Alcestis* of Phrynichus. ⁷³⁵ Athena holds her ballot in readiness to use it, if the votes are equally divided, but not otherwise 7 (cf. 41). An old-established rule of Athenian law gave the accused the advantage in this contingency. The poet regards this as a sacred institution, founded by Athena at the trial of Orestes and borrowed by the Athenian law-courts from the procedure of the Areiopagus. See also Euripides, referring to the trial in his *Electra* (1266 f., cf. *Iphig. in Taur.* 966, 1471). Such a dispensing power could belong only to a god. It was not for a human tribunal, having for its one duty to punish and repress crime, to pardon a culprit, when the arguments for and against him were of equal weight; but a god could alter the balance by an arbitrary act of authority. ⁷³⁸ Athena ('she of the mighty sire'), in the Epic, is peculiarly the child of her father, endowed with 'strength and thoughtful counsel' equal to his. The aegis belonged to her as well as to Zeus, *Il.* v. 738. This preference for the father, whatever its special motive here, was a commonplace; cf. Eurip. *Elect.* 934 f. The son was expected to inherit and to emulate the father's manly and civic qualities and to follow him in serving the state; hence

the tie was a stronger one than that of simple parenthood. ⁷⁴⁶ Death by hanging implies the last extremity of misery, for it was shameful even for a slave. It is cruelly inflicted by Odysseus on his women-slaves as a punishment for their treachery (*Od.* xx.). ⁷⁴⁹ Two methods of counting were employed in the Athenian courts. (i.) One urn was for the used ballots, black (for conviction) and white (for acquittal); into the other (the 'inoperative urn') the waste ballots were thrown, so that they gave no clue to the voting. The ballots (pebbles) in the 'operative' urn were separated, the black from the white, in sight of the court, and the result announced. (ii.) There was an 'urn of mercy' and an 'urn of death,' in which the votes were respectively deposited and then counted. Here the term 'sorting' might appear to point to the former method, in which case we must suppose that Athena holds up a white pebble (735) and afterwards (753) adds it to the six votes of acquittal. But the context strongly indicates the contrary, for there is stress on the counting (748), and two urns have to be cleared (742); by 'sorting' we must understand merely separating their contents. The poet in a parallel passage (*Agam.* 817) clearly refers to the second method, and the same is assumed by Aristophanes in the *Wasps*, where the voter is made by stealth to drop his ballot into an urn of acquittal. ⁷⁵⁹ That is, invoked with the third libation as 'Saviour.' ⁷⁶¹ A more specific allusion to the defensive alliance with Argos (290). The passage following (767 ff.), in which Orestes threatens the Argives with disaster if they should invade Attica, is suspected by Dindorf and Wecklein as having been interpolated after the Argives had abandoned the alliance, viz. in

the fifteenth year of the Peloponnesian war, when they sided with Sparta and made an inroad into Attica. A very similar 'prophecy' in Euripides' *Supplikes* (1191 ff.) was probably prompted by that event. ⁷⁶⁷ The ghosts would cause not merely alarms but actual disasters by sending evil dreams and omens from the grave to strike dismay at critical moments. ⁷⁷⁷ Apollo and Orestes leave the stage; the judges remain (cf. 949).—Euripides (*Orestes*) sends him to Arcadia and to Athens, where he is to be tried and acquitted. Ultimately he marries Hermione, daughter of Menelaus and Helen, and rules in Argos.

Third Stasimon—Sixth Episode, 784–919.

⁷⁸⁴ ff. A description of blight as a pestilential emanation from the 'heart' of the Erinyes, poisoning the life of the earth at its source. ⁸⁰³ With Wieseler's emendation, this depicts the tender bloom ('down') of the young plants flecked by mildew. ⁸⁰⁵ This is the chasm sacred to the Eumenides, still to be seen on the N. E. side of the Areiopagus. Cf. Eurip. *Elect.* 1270 and the allusions in the closing scene (1023). It was apparently within the 'precinct.' The cavern-temple contained low altars of the simple kind called *eschara* (806). The epithet applied to these is explained by Müller (by inference from the cult of Demeter Erinyes at Phigaleia) as meaning that the Eumenides were worshipped with oil poured on wool. It is worth notice that the sacred stones at the cross-roads, where the infernal Hecate was worshipped, were oiled (as Theophrastus tells us) by passers-by of a superstitious turn. ⁸³⁵ Offerings were made on behalf of the bride to

deities associated with marriage (Artemis, Hera), to the Fates as presiding over life and death, and to the Eumenides as controlling the sources of fertility. ⁸⁴⁹ The wisdom that goes with age, as the scholiast explains. ⁸⁵⁵ The joint temple of Athene and Erechtheus, known as the Erechtheion, on the Acropolis, which was not merely close to the Areiopagus, but connected with it by a ridge. ⁸⁵⁸⁻⁶⁶ This passage is suspected by Wecklein on account of its 'strongly pronounced political tendency and mannered style,' and the allusion to foreign war as if it were actually impending. The imagery, however, is thoroughly Aeschylean. ⁸⁶¹ The cock had a bad reputation as the pertinacious bird, which fought with its own kindred. So Pindar speaks of 'the cock that fights but at home.' Cf. *Agam.* 1671. ⁸⁶⁹ The piety of Athens is extolled by Aeschylus (cf. 912, 920), and the *Oedipus Coloneus* of Sophocles is full of the same sentiment. It is one of the themes of Pericles in his funeral oration, Thuc. ii. 41. ⁸⁸⁶ Suasion (Peitho) is so far personified that she figures as a goddess in Greek art.

Exodus, 920-1047.

⁹²⁰ The Persian invasion was regarded as an assault on the gods of Greece, the more because the invaders destroyed the temples. ⁹³⁵ The sins of previous generations; cf. *Choeph.* 402. ⁹⁴¹ The nursery with its measured rows of young vines and fig trees. ⁹⁴⁴ With another emendation [Meineke] the blessing of Pan is invoked; but the Euminides would hardly call in this new-comer as their partner. ⁹⁴⁷ The 'earth's rich progeny' is here mineral wealth, as is evident from an

epithet connecting it with Hermes, the god of treasure-trove. The silver mines of Laurion and Thoricus in Attica were State property; cf. Herod. vii. 144. This 'spring of wealth' is noticed, *Pers.* 238. ⁹⁶⁰ Those who have the rightful control of marriage, viz., Zeus, Hera (214), and Aphrodite. The Fates are their assessors (217). They are addressed as 'sisters by the same mother' (Night), having no father (Hesiod, *Theog.* 213, 217). ⁹⁷³ 'Zeus of the agora,' the place of public debate in the old times. Cf. *Agam.* 90. ⁹⁸⁶ A variation of the phrase 'to have the same friends and enemies,' which was used in treaties of alliance. ⁹⁹² Equivalent to the peculiarly Attic title Eumenides (the 'gracious'), which does not, however, occur in this play. Cf. 1030, where the same epithet recurs. ⁹⁹⁸ The Athenians dwell 'under the wings' of the goddess presiding above in the Acropolis, and 'near to Zeus,' who had from of old his altars on the Hill, one dedicated to 'Zeus the highest,' another to 'Zeus the guardian of the city.' ¹⁰⁰⁴ The supplementary chorus of women now advance, as if from the temple of Athena, carrying torches. The allusion to sacrifice implies only that one was preparing at the entrance of the cavern, which would be out of sight. ¹⁰¹¹ This old name was attached to the Hill itself (Cranai, 'the rocky'). The early 'Pelagic' settlers there were accordingly called 'Cranaoi' and their king 'Cranaos.' ¹⁰²² Compare the closing scene of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, where Aeschylus is escorted back to earth by torch-light, associated as here with the Underworld. ¹⁰²³ See the description of the Areiopagus, Pausanias i. 28. He notices in connection with the temple statues of

Hermes, Ploutos, and Gaia, as well as images of the infernal goddesses themselves, with no suggestion of terror about them. These, as we are informed by a scholiast, were three in number, the work of Calamis and Scopas: they stood, presumably, outside the temple, the precinct of which extended some way toward the Acropolis. A tomb of Oedipus was shown there, notwithstanding the legend of his burial at Colonus, which Sophocles followed. In the vicinity was an altar of "Athene Areia, which Orestes erected when he escaped punishment." On this and the name Areiopagos see Miss Harrison, *Mythol. and Monuments of Ancient Athens*, E. 23. She conjectures that the connection of the place with Ares is due to a mistaken etymology, and that the original name was 'Hill of the Arai' or Curses (see note on l. 417).

¹⁰²⁴ The image here is the old *xoanon*. In the later Parthenon the goddess had various attendants, *e.g.* the 'table-bearer,' the tire-woman, the arrhephori, who carried her sacred emblems in procession. ¹⁰²⁵ In the Greek idiom the procession is called the 'eye,' *i.e.* the pride of the land; cf. *Choeph.* 934 and *Pers.* 171 ("the master's presence is the eye of the house"). The reference being in the future, it need not be supposed that the train of 'maids and matrons and aged women' appears on the stage. ¹⁰²⁸ Purple (*i.e.* crimson) was from Homeric times the most sumptuous ware.

¹⁰³⁷ The epithet ('Ogygian') denotes dim antiquity. It is applied by Hesiod (*Theog.* 806) to the Styx.

¹⁰³⁸ Silence was a special feature of the cult of the *Semnai* (the 'awful' goddesses), as the Eumenides were named at Athens. Their priestesses, *leiteirae* (public

ministrants), were chosen from the Hesychidae, a house supposed to be descended from a hero Hesychus (the 'silent'), whose shrine was close by. Oedipus (*Oed. Col.* 489) is charged not to speak aloud in praying to them.

VARIATIONS FROM SIDGWICK'S TEXT

Agamemnon : 6, 7 Housman, 29 Verrall, 69 vulg., 128 f. Housman, 141 vulg., 374 Hermann, 412 Hermann, Wecklein, 612 Editor, 767 Paley, 948 vulg., 1041 Blomfield, 1172 Hermann, Kennedy, 1194 vulg., 1216 Weil, 1235 O. Müller, 1322 vulg., 1563 vulg., 1605 Verrall, 1650 Paley, 1660 vulg.

Choephoroe : 73 f. Hermann, 131 Schneidewin, 279 Verrall, 450 Editor, 482 Clausen, 544 Metzger, 624-30 Editor, 644 f. Macnaghten, 650 Lachmann, 656 Hermann, 831-7 Rankin.

Eumenides : 358 Paley, 445 Porson, 803 Wieseler, 944 Dobree, 989 Musgrave.

INDEX

(A. = Agamemnon, C. = Choephoroe, E. = Eumenides)

The references are to the Commentary and Introductory Essays

- AEGIS, E. 405
 Aeschylus, xliv (note), xlviii
 ,, style of, A. 1411,
 1477
 Agamemnon, xxxv f., C. 982
 (murder)
 Altars, A. 513, 519 (incense),
 1056, 1277; C. 109 (tomb);
 E. 164 (seat)
 Amazons, E. 689
 Amyclae, A. 43
 Archilochus, xxiv, xxviii
 Areiopagus, xliii f., E. 689
 Arion, xxiv f.
 Aristotle, xxii f. (rise of tragedy)
 Artemis, A. 140
 Athena, xliii, E. 80 (images), 294,
 665, 748, 1024, 735 (ballot)
 Augury, A. 116; C. 259

 BACCHUS, C. 32
 Balloting, E. 749
 Betyls, E. 40
 Birthday gifts, E. 4
 Bloodshed, C. 67
 Bows, C. 161
 Burial, A. 455

 CASSANDRA, xliii
 'Charon's steps,' E. 93

 Choerilus, xxx
 Chorus, A. 1347; E. 585, 1004
 ,, (cyclic), xxv
 Choes, xxi, E. 278, 567
 Cleanthes, A. 180
 Clytemnestra, xxxvii ff., C. 918,
 1011 (her weapons)
 ,, in Sophocles,
 xxxix
 Curtain, A. 1372; C. 973

 DANTE, A. 239
 Delos, E. 9
 Delphi, C. 1037; E. 1, 14, 27-
 32
 Demeter, C. 128
 Dice, A. 33
 Dionysia, xx ff.
 Dionysus, xviii (name)
 Dithyramb, xxiv
 Divination, A. 1135, 1265, 1270
 Dodona, xli
 Dreams, C. 271, 525
 Drink-offerings, C. 15, 150

 EARTH (Gaia), xlix, E. 2 f.
 Eleusis, C. 128 (doctrine)
 Ephialtes, xlv (note)
 Epimenides, E. 62

Erinyes, A. 59, 70; C. 150 (libations), 283, 406; E. 48-55 (description), 107 f. (offerings), 322 (parentage), 417 (name)

Eumenides, E. 805 (shrine, cf. 1023), 835, 992

Euripides, C. 237

FATE (Moirā), C. 306, 647; E. 28, 217, 960

Funeral customs, C. 6, 8 (dedication of hair), 9 (prothesis), 15 (drink-offerings), 98 (wreaths), 129 (lustration), 150

GALL, C. 183

Giant, A. 692; C. 1047

Gorgon, E. 48

HADES, xlvii, C. 517; E. 767

Harpies, E. 50

Hearth (Delphic), C. 1037

Helena, A. 686

Hera, E. 214

Heracles, A. 1041

Hermes, C. 1, 815; E. 89, 91, 93

Hesychidæ, E. 108, 1038

Homicide (see Areiopagus), C. 313, 1038

House, C. 653 (door), 801 (treasury)

Hyperboreans, C. 373

IMAGES, A. 520

Inarus, E. 294

Iphigeneia, xxxvi, A. 239; C. 242

Ixion, E. 441

KOMMOS, A. 1449

King (as priest), C. 243

LEMNUS, C. 634

Lenaea, xx ff.

Leprosy, C. 278

Libations, A. 246; C. 15

Linos, A. 121

Loxias, E. 62

MADNESS, A. 1408; C. 1002; E. 330

Masks, C. 172

Medicine, A. 17, 849; C. 471, 539

Metaphors, A. 36, 180, 364, 650, 1182, 1473

Metoecei, A. 57

Mixing-bowl, C. 344

Mutilation, C. 439

Mycenae, A. 24

NAMES, A. 686 (cf. 699); C. 949

Nemesis, A. 754, 920

OATHS, xliii, E. 621

Oil, A. 96

Ololugmos, A. 1117

Omens, A. 980; C. 249, 259

Omphalos, E. 39 f.

Orestes, xl, C. 315; E. 777

Outlawry, C. 292

PAEAN, A. 246, 645; C. 151, 344

Painting, A. 241

Pan, xxiv, A. 57; E. 23

Parentage, C. 502; E. 660, 738

Parodus, A. 40

Pelasgians, E. 1001

Persia, A. 282; C. 423; E. 186

Persians, the, xxxii

Phoebus, Phoebe, C. 34; E. 4

Philomela, A. 1144

- Philtres, C. 1029
 Phrynichus, xxxii
 Pratinas, xxiv, xxvi f.
 Prologue, A. 1
 Prometheus, xlviii f., A. 312
 " (Purkæus), xxvii
 Prophetæ, E. 32
 Purification, C. 98; E. 278, 283

 RECOGNITIONS, C. 205
 Retaliation, C. 122, 313
 River-gods, C. 6

 SATYRS, xxiv
 Satyr-drama, xxvii
 Sculpture, C. 671; E. 294
 Serpent (chthonic), E. 127
Seven against Thebes, xxxii, xxxvi
 Sleep (divination in), E. 105
 Sphinx, A. 80 (riddle)
 Sigeion, E. 398
 Silver-mines, E. 947
 Sophocles, A. 24; C. 242

 Stesichorus, xxxvi
 Stoning, A. 1117
Suppliants, xxxii.

 TETRALOGY, xxvii
 Theseus, xix, xxx
 Thespis, xxix
 Tombs, C. 4, 722
 Torch-race, A. 312
 Tripod (Delphic), E. 29
 Trumpet, E. 567

 VEIL (bridal), A. 1179; C. 492
 Version, second, E. 405, 683,
 764, 858
 Voting-urns, A. 817

 WEAVING, C. 232
 Wings, A. 664; E. 51
 Wrestling, C. 498

 ZEUS, lii f., A. 180, 246, 972;
 C. 245, 395; E. 973, 998

THE END

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